



Tentmaking Briefs

TENTMAKING BRIEFS eBook VOLUME I

*a collection of short articles
from the world of tentmaking
business as mission*

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The Ultimate Goal of Tentmaking

Tentmaking in Scripture

"Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians...You yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow." - 2 Th 1:1;3:7-9

The Ultimate Goal of Missions

When "Robert" first went to the "Yanyin" region of China in 1991, he found 3 house churches and 85 Han Chinese Christians in a region of among 7 million people and 5 people groups. After surveying the region, he began mobilizing Chinese co-laborers and planting churches with them in 1994. Just three year later, the number of churches had grown to 195 in number and spread throughout the region, taking root in all five people groups. Robert describes his church planting strategy as POUCH: Participative Bible study/worship groups; Obedience to God's word as a the measure of success; Unpaid and multiple lay or bi-vocational church leaders; Cell churches rarely exceeding 15 members before starting new groups; and Homes or store-fronts as primary meeting places for these cell churches. Robert would first model "doing church" with new believers using the POUCH approach. Then he would assist them to plant a daughter church. Third, he'd watch to see that they started a third-generation church without his involvement. Then he would leave--the crucial final step to ensure an indigenous, self-propagating movement.

The ultimate goal of missions is to plant self-multiplying, self-nurturing, self-led, self-supporting (Great Commission) churches of genuine disciples capable of evangelizing their own people and also reaching other peoples. Where an indigenous church already exists, our task is to integrate new believers into it, and to help it be the kind of church just described. Why is this the ultimate goal? Because Jesus commands us to "make disciples...[who] obey everything I have commanded." As soon as two or more turn to Christ, they are transformed and called to love each other as Christ has loved them. (Jn. 15:12) God is building a new family.

This means simple house churches, not complex, organizational churches. This is something that committed, everyday, workplace Christians can do, with a little preparation.

Many think that tentmakers only play a complimentary role of assisting "real" missionaries as if tentmakers are not full-fledged mission workers. As a result, Many tentmakers don't plant churches because they don't aim to. Paul, the apostle, and his co-workers, proved this by planting many churches as self-supporting, everyday Christians. In fact, Paul deliberately chose "lay" strategy of working for his living to set a pattern of every Christian being a disciple-maker and of everyday Christians giving leadership and planting churches. This is why the early church spread so fast. This was no super feat of a spiritual superman.

Everyday, workplace Christians (tentmakers) did it then; they are doing it today! The full Commission belongs to every Christian, not just to "full-time" missionaries. God does not relegate any Christian to second-class status, nor to any reduction of their God-given role! As Jesus left for heaven, he said, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given unto me. Go therefore..." With the command, he promised his power. Tentmakers can! They just need training and experience to develop skill. This is a core component of Global Opportunities' GO Equipped! Course.

Sources: Church Planting Movements by David Garrison (published by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention). Pages 16-19. Order for free or copy from http://www.imb.org/globalresearch/CPM/what_is_a_cpm.htm. The Ultimate Goal of Tentmaking. GO World, Volume 9, No. 2-1999.

Light in the Darkness

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16

In the 1960s, Jackie Pullinger, a young British woman, felt called by God to the Far East. With a degree in music, she wrote the Hong Kong government seeking a teaching post. They replied that they had no positions. So she tried a mission agency, but they said she was "too young." Acting in faith, with no job, Jackie boarded a ship for Hong Kong.

Upon arriving, she met Auntie Donnie, who showed her a primary school she ran in "The Walled City," an area overrun by every imaginable crime. Also named "Hak Nam," meaning darkness, Jackie learned it was "a place of terrible darkness, both physical and spiritual." On that first visit, Auntie Donnie asked her to teach there. "Before I had fully realized what I was letting myself in for, I had agreed to teach percussion band, singing, and English conversation three afternoons a week." Jackie also picked up another "regular job teaching in a primary school in the mornings."

Through her work, Jackie started a youth club, especially because of the influence of one of her young male students. Teaching gave her natural contact with young people, out of which her ministry grew. Her work gained credibility and identification with the people. One student dialoged with her like this:

"Poon Siu Jeh (Jackie's name "Pullinger" in Chinese), I haven't got a job and I've run out of money."

"But I'm afraid I haven't got any money."

"Oh, but you have--you're terribly rich."

"No, no, really I haven't got any money."

"Oh yes you have, because you've got a church in America like the rest of them."

"No really I haven't got a church in America. Actually I am from England, but no church sent me."

A plane flew over head. "Huh, one day I expect you'll get into one of those and fly back to where you came from."

"No, there's no danger of that because I haven't got enough money to get on one," I replied honestly.

"Well, your parents can send you the money anyway--there is plenty of money where you came from--we've seen how all those English people live up the peak."

"No," I said, "you're wrong about that. My parents haven't got any money either."

Pullinger wrote, "This kind of conversation took place many times; it was an indictment of those evangelists who flew into Hong Kong, sang sweet songs about the love of Jesus on stage and on Hong Kong TV, then jumped back into their planes and flew away again."

Slowly Jackie gained credibility because she lived and worked like the people did, and stayed long term. It took years. In fact, for years, as hard as she tried, nobody paid any attention because they had heard it before--from people who never stayed or lived like they did. But as Jackie continued to work among the people year after year, they began to trust the Jesus she told them about both on and off the job.

Jackie shined Christ's light into the darkness by working for her living among the people. Through her persevering work, they saw "her good deeds and praised [her] Father in heaven." God enlarged her ministry far beyond anything she had ever imagined. Without working, the light would never have shown so clearly. Will you use your profession to bring the Light to a dark part of the world?

Let God use your profession overseas

Alan" and "Rachel" opened their home to people they met in China and invited new friends to an English language Bible study. They sang Christian songs, discussed a specific passage of the Bible, mostly about Jesus, prayed together, ate refreshments, and enjoyed each other. Within a few months a couple of people became Christians. Friend brought friends, the group grew, and more came to Jesus. They baptized the new believers and discipled them as they grew, working together with and mentoring leaders within the group. Even before they left, the group sent one member to Tibet to reach people. After two years, "Alan" and "Rachel" left the group as a small house church in the hands of the leaders they had been developing. That church reproduced at least six more house churches over the next five years!

Were "Alan" and "Rachel" full-time missionaries? No! They were everyday working Christians. They both worked as teachers. But they were determined to call Chinese people to Christ. The people in their Bible study came mostly from people they met at work. They simply integrated work and witness, and God used them powerfully.

Ruth Siemens did the same thing while teaching in international schools in Peru and Brazil. She reached colleagues, students, and school service staff through natural on-the-job contact. As her life and words awakened spiritual hunger, she invited them into her home and into Bible studies. She geared these studies just for them to investigate Jesus.

In her spare time she did similar things at the nearby university, and started the Christian university student movements in Peru and Brazil. These were student-run, and Ruth coached the students in reaching other and discipling them.

This story is being repeated over and over by Christians who are dedicating their professional skills to work overseas in order to reach the local people. "Mark" worked with a company in Central Asia to arrange for new sites to operate their business. He quietly demonstrated his faith and shared when people asked. And they did ask. He repeatedly met Muslim warlords and tribal leaders. One of them demanded that he tell a religious story as a "holy man." With trembling, he told the story of Jesus. It moved the leader and his men and he invited him to tell more about Jesus every time he returned. Out of this a new church sprang up among this unreached people group.

God is using workplace Christians willing to give their professional skills and their hearts to reaching lost people around the world. He can use you, and he will, if you are willing.

Have you wondered if you could do more for Christ's global mission? Longed to see more people come to Jesus? And be transformed into his image? Wondered if God could use you more powerfully without switching to full-time ministry?

"If only I had gotten this before going!"

In a comedy movie, Chevy Chase plays a spy who is forced to hide his identity as a famous surgeon. Naturally, he gets trapped into performing a delicate surgery on a patient while a room full of doctors is looking on. If you've not seen it, you can image how humorous this could be.

But how would you feel if such a "surgeon" was about to operate on you? Even more, imagine being called upon to operate on someone yourself without training. It would be terrifying and ludicrous. No one practices surgery without years of serving as an apprentice under skilled surgeons. The same thing applies to airline pilots, firemen, plumbers, etc. You would never accept a pilot flying for you who had only read books on flying, nor a fireman who had only read manuals. To a lesser degree, this applies to all professions. Academic training is never enough, especially when it involves complex, high-risk tasks.

Does this apply to tentmaking? You bet it does. In spades. Integrating all of life-work, family, neighbors, community, ministry, etc.-under Christ's Lordship is challenging. So is leading people to Christ, discipling them, and nurturing them into simple house churches. Sadly, many tentmakers and missionaries are not very effective because they weren't effective before going; they had inadequate godliness and ministry skills. We find the biggest need of prospective tentmakers is to become equipped and effective before going into another culture. They need to learn under a skilled surgeon before operating on people, before going as tentmakers.

Jesus understood this. So he chose twelve "to be with him and to be sent out to preach." (Mk. 3:14) These men never received Bible school or seminary training. He trained them by taking them "with him" on-the-job as he loved, healed, proclaimed, and discipled. They watched him and copied him. Only later did Jesus send them out to "preach." When he did, they did what they had seen him do and were tremendously effective.

They were so effective that a huge crowd followed them in order to hear Jesus—a crowd of 5000 men plus thousands of women and children whom he miraculously fed. After Jesus' resurrection, these men turned the ancient world upside down.

Jesus' apprenticeship model worked because imitating others is the way humans really learn. Paul understood this, so he told the Corinthians, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." (1 Co. 11:1) This was his discipling "strategy," not classroom lectures, not handouts, etc. He demonstrated what he taught—he lived it. He knew that godliness is more "caught than taught," that people copy what they see, not what they hear. In Paul, people saw joy in the midst of suffering, faith in the face of mortal danger, unflagging love for failing, even hurtful people, passionate zeal for God, exemplary work practices, compelling preaching and teaching, effective discipling, wise, Christ-like leading, etc. And they saw Paul do all this as a full-time worker supporting himself.

They saw the same example in Paul's co-workers—Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and the rest. They were all tentmakers who worked for their living. The early converts saw everyday working Christians living lives of powerful godliness and ministry. Paul and his team showed the supernatural power of God, and made serious discipleship and disciple-making normal for regular Christians. Early Christians found it easy to believe God worked like this through ordinary disciples because they saw it with their own eyes. To them, this was normal Christianity.

These stories tell us exactly what training is ideal to make us effective tentmakers—working as apprentices to a master tentmaker. This is what Timothy and Titus did. This is what early church leaders did. Unfortunately, it's very hard to do today because there are few master tentmakers.

This model of making disciples through exhibiting the gospel, working personally with a few, and leading by example and word, is very simple and powerful. It works. Regular workplace Christians can do it. In fact, God is using workplace Christians as effective tentmakers around the world. But this model has been largely replaced by an organizational, impersonal, program-oriented, and academic model. And this has become our mental model of church and ministry. And we do what we see. What we need is to replace the old mental model with the simpler, more powerful New Testament model. This is why we need effective tentmakers to show us how to do it. This is also why there are few master tentmakers for us to work with as apprentices.

So is there an alternative? What about bringing some effective tentmakers together to share stories of how they were effective? Their stories enable us to "watch" them after the fact. They let us "see" and grasp a model of effectiveness we've never seen before, especially as they explain the Biblical principles of why it works.

If we could gather these leaders for a concentrated, 4-5 day course, built around the core principles of tentmaking, then any motivated potential tentmaker can get this powerful training by simply taking a few days off. We have done this with the GO Equipped! Tentmaking Course. We created a course built around the core Biblical principles of tentmaking using stories told by effective tentmakers.

Ari Rocklin is one of the tentmakers who will share his story. But he learned it the hard way, through much questioning and work. When he joined Global Opportunities and first helped with our course, he said, "If only I had gotten this before going!"

Other tentmakers have expressed the same thing.

You can get his training for a fairly small investment of time and money. And you can sit and talk with tentmakers who have done it and who keep on learning from working with tentmakers. Sign up now to take advantage of this crucial training before you attempt to perform tentmaking surgery!

What course alumni are saying:

Not only did this course help...for going as a tentmaker, it also gave me practical advice on how to start...sharing my faith here at home while I finish my studies. On my way home from the course, I shared my faith with a seeker for the first time in my life.
-Participant, Bergen 08

Thank you...for this invaluable course! We are now serving as tentmakers in an unreached country. Truly, there is no other course out there that is specifically designed by and for tentmakers.
-Mr & Mrs. Zee

The Tentmaking course in Bergen in May probably is the best course I have participated in, ever.
-Oddvar A.

I've been thinking about the course in Dallas. So far, there is nothing that was not covered. The course must truly have been developed out of years of experience. I still draw on the [training]-the importance of a prayer team, jumping right into the culture, living out what I believe during day-to-day business..., the importance of opening up the home... I could go on. That course was truly sent by God at just the right time.
-Jon (tentmaker with an IT business in India)

Oh my friend!!! How can I express my gratitude for the exceptional program you offered! Thank you indeed! I told my former "boss" that this course was one of the best programs for training missionaries I have participated in.
-Mission leader, USA

Do You Need a "Special Call?"

Back in college, I was greatly moved by a small InterVarsity Press booklet titled "Called, But Not Going."

It confronted the issue of Christians who sensed God calling them into missions or ministry, but then over the years, allowed "the cares of this world" to kill the call of God so that they never went. The booklet sought to turn them back to God's call.

It was very compelling, but as I understood more of the Bible, I became troubled by one major implication of this booklet—that it only applied to a special group who had received a "special" call to "the ministry," i.e., to full-time service. It did not apply to the vast majority of regular Christians who never received such a call. They were not called to the same level of commitment, godliness, and ministry. With no "special call," everyday Christians are mostly off the hook for the Great Commission and relegated to a secondary role to pay, pray, and obey.

The result of this theology is a huge gap between clergy (those in full-time ministry) and lay people. I saw this gap profoundly illustrated when I helped our church host its annual regional pastor's conference. I met some wonderful pastors. But their statements showed the size of the clergy/laity gap.

Pastors spoke repeatedly about how "God called me into the ministry," "before (and after) I was called into the ministry," "those of us in the ministry," etc. By implication, the rest of the church was not in the ministry.

While this was one of the strongest clergy/laity divisions I've witnessed, this thinking permeates the church. Lay Christians are considered a separate class from those in the ministry. Since they do not have the training, the time, or the special call, the church cannot expect that much from them. They are reduced to a secondary support role and largely relieved of the full calling of God in the New Testament.

The late Pete Hammond of Ministry in Daily Life (www.urbana.org/whole-life-stewardship) said, "We have established a two tier community of faith with the exaltation of pastors, missionaries and 'full-time workers' as the elite strike force of the kingdom. Everyone else is quietly, but terribly effectively relegated to a 'pray, pay and obey' passivity. Lord, forgive our blindness!" (October 1998)

While the Bible tells how God called people to specific tasks, it says nothing of a special call which elevates some Christians to a special class with a higher calling and level of discipleship than other Christians who live at a lower level. This terrible theology has deeply harmed the church.

God's call is primarily to himself. This is the innate meaning of calling—that someone, in this case God, summons another person to himself. God calls all Christians to submit all of their lives to him as Lord. As Lord, he owns us, and in salvation, we return our lives to him and receive his incredible pardon for our rebellion. As Paul says, Christians are "called to belong to Jesus Christ" (Rm. 1:5-7)

And this means all their lives so that "whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Co 10:31) If Christians are called to honor God in such basic habits as eating and drinking, then they are certainly called to do so in all other parts of their lives. Depending on where God has placed them, God has a calling for Christians as workers, as bosses, as spouses, as children, as parents, as neighbors, as landlords, as citizens, and so forth.

In all these callings, Christians are to think, live and speak Christianly, demonstrating the divine difference the gospel makes in their lives. The implications of these callings are innumerable. Let me mention one important one. Christians are called to stand quietly, but firmly for what is good and right in the workplace, community, and nation, even in the face of social, political, and legal pressure.

Joined with God's call to submit all of life to him is his call to bring others to him as Lord to receive his extravagant, undeserved pardon and love—in other words, to make disciples. Every Christian is called to seek for Jesus' kingdom (his reign) to come, for his will to be done, and for every knee to bow to him. (Mt. 6:10; Php. 2:10; Rm. 14:11) One of the great insights of the Reformation was the rediscovery that all Christians are called to be priests who reconcile others to God. Sadly, this has yet to be fully implemented.

As Christians follow Christ, they internalize his heart and long to see people become disciples from every people and nation. (Mt. 28:19) They cannot be satisfied reaching only their own people. And Christians are called to do this primarily through living and speaking for God in all areas of their lives.

This is God's call to all Christians. There is no lesser calling!

Biblically, this is why tentmakers and everyday disciples are so important. Full-time Christians cannot impact society alone. Only workplace Christians can demonstrate the gospel in all of life and make disciples in all sectors of society. And it is they who have regular contact with nonbelievers in all walks of life.

Many people see Christianity as irrelevant. The church is losing influence in society. Most people are Biblically illiterate. Despite mega-churches, the church is shrinking. It is rapidly losing young people—75% during college years.

This cannot be remedied by better worship services and programs. People need to see the power of the gospel in the nitty-gritty of life—that it works for everyday people under the demands, pressures, and joys of everyday life, not just for full-time workers who get paid to be spiritual and talk about God. They must see supernaturally transformed, ordinary Christians. Unless the church transforms people rather than programs, it will fade away, though it may look good for awhile longer. And we will continue to export the same weaknesses overseas through our missions work.

Only workplace Christians can live out the gospel under the demands of everyday life. Only they can steadily influence co-workers and neighbors through their godly example and moral insight. It was this diffusion of Christian thinking and morals which made America so successful. And only this can transform nations today. Everyday Christians fulfilling God's calling are absolutely indispensable for God's purposes.

Imagine the impact if everyday Christians recovered their high calling before the watching world. Imagine the reaction if all Christians showed up at work next Monday and served their boss as if they were serving the Lord himself (Eph 6:5-8, Col 3:22-23). And imagine this happening in all areas of Christians' lives! It would astonish the world!

God has called us to such a high calling that we need no "special call." We just need to grab hold of his calling with all our being, willing to go wherever he leads, whether to our local workplace or to another country. If we do this, Jesus will surely be with us, lead us and empower us "with all authority in heaven and on earth." (Mt. 28:18-20) And he will make a difference through us.

Ten Steps to Going as a Tentmaker

Don't worry if you are not good in all these areas. No one is. These are key steps to preparing to be an effective tentmaker. Many can be pursued simultaneously. Some provide links to additional resources on GO's website.

1. Build your relationship with God. Everything flows from the strength of your relationship with God. How are you doing at being filled and renewed daily through time alone with God in devotional reading and in prayer? What else do you need to do? Develop your strength in spiritual warfare. Sin and temptation assault us through the evil world system and our own sinful vulnerability. Strengthen your ability to maintain spiritual vitality under pressure in an alien culture with minimal support.

2. Build inductive Bible study skills & Biblical understanding. Aim to know that you are seeing what the original author was doing in a passage, not just what you've been told, or have always thought because of your background. Steadily study whole sections of Scripture, learning better how to observe what the passage really says, interpret what the writer meant, and apply it to your life today. Keep building your understanding of Biblical truth and principles to gain more and more of God's mind about all areas of life. Memorize key passages for personal use, evangelism, and discipling.
3. Cultivate healthy family relationships. You will face great stress in a new culture. Work proactively on your family life. Build family patterns of eating, talking, working, and having fun together. Read, attend seminars, and seek counsel from sharp, godly couples. How ready are you for the stress of cross-cultural work and witness? What else can you do to prepare?
4. Develop workplace discipleship. Work is central to humans created in the image of God. God is the great worker and we were designed to be co-workers with him and rulers under him to manage and care for the world. Thus legitimate work is a sacred, God-honoring activity through which we "feel God's pleasure." We are called to servanthood toward bosses, customers, co-workers, and the larger community. Excellence, godly ethics, genuine caring, Kingdom values, and natural, meaningful witness should define us. We are also called to influence the thought world of our vocation. Where can you grow in these areas and what specific steps will you take?
5. Learn to do workplace evangelism. Tentmakers answer questions from seekers made hungry for God by observing them—their integrity, quality work, caring relationships and words about God. They integrate work and witness and share Christ naturally by fitting comments about God in normal conversation followed by thoughtful responses to co-workers' questions. Deliberately work on developing workplace evangelism. For more, see Workplace Evangelism (condensed) or Workplace Evangelism (full)
6. Learn to lead Bible study discussions, whether evangelistic or discipleship. Ask questions to lead participants to discover the truth in the text for themselves versus telling them what it says. Lead the group to respond to the truth of the passage. Find opportunities to lead or participate in seeker Bible studies. Learn how to make seekers really comfortable. See Investigative Bible Study Discussions.
7. Help start a simple church. Self-reproducing, indigenous churches are the end goal in making disciples. Develop your understanding of what moves a discipleship group into becoming a simple house church—issues like baptism, communion, church leadership. Look for opportunity to be involved in starting or helping a simple house church. Ask God to give you opportunity to lead people to Christ, disciple them in a group, and coach them into becoming a church which is led by leaders from within the group.
8. Get missions training, especially GO tentmaker training. Read and get training in the biblical basis of missions, history, geography, growth, trends, issues, strategies, cross-cultural living, workplace witness, discipling, church-planting, church multiplication, indigeneity/dependency, etc. Perspectives is the single, best course on missions and covers all these areas. This semester-long evening course is available in many locations around the US and Canada. Take it at the college level for greatest value. For training in tentmaking, attend GO Equipped! GO's 4-day intensive course. This unique course is totally focused on the principles and skills you need to be effective overseas.

Also, get involved cross-culturally with another ethnic group and church near you. Build friendships. Learn the culture. Share Christ. Even start learning the language.

9. Research the global job market. Use the Internet to research jobs needed related to your profession, the credentials required, the companies and organizations involved, and how to customize your resume or CV to fit openings. This research can help you determine where you might need additional training and experience. When you are ready to look for a job, follow the suggestions in Today's Global Job Market.

10. Get needed degrees & experience. Most positions require at least a bachelor's degree. However, we've helped a number of tentmakers go without a college degree. Sometimes experience counts more than a degree. While there are entry-level jobs, you generally need two or more years' experience. TEFL/ESL is an exception even to this. Schools often accept any native English speaker. Always remember that as Christians we want to serve people well and honor Christ. Successful cross-cultural experience enhances desirability to employers. To get such experience, consider work study programs, internships abroad, multinational organizations, Peace Corps, the Mennonite Central Committee, etc.

Filling the Hole in Holistic Missions

Holistic ministry is the great rallying cry in missions today—the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world. This is a powerful statement. It zeroes in on the three major components of holistic mission. First, Jesus has commanded the whole church, not just an elite few, to make disciples of all peoples. Second, he directed the church to declare the whole gospel—everything he commanded, not just salvation. So we must exhibit the gospel in all aspects of life—the physical, emotional, social, and economic, as well as the spiritual. And we must lead believers into obedience in all areas of life. Third, the church must take Jesus' message to the whole world, to all people groups.

But how does the missions enterprise carry out this dictum? It runs programs—programs to feed, clothe, build, rescue, train, provide medical care, run micro-finance programs, do business development, evangelize, disciple, etc. I saw this over and over at Lausanne 04, the mission movement's primary global consultation.

Programs provide very real help, but suffer limitations. The work often becomes a job and the people become projects. Have you ever seen a program treat people impersonally or unlovingly? We all have. Programs don't love people; people do. Everything hangs on workers walking with God.

And who does this missions work? A small, select few, not "the whole church." These are largely professional, paid workers, not everyday Christians who simply follow Jesus and love people. Ministry is their job. Many are deeply committed, caring Christians. But they cannot demonstrate everyday discipleship under all the pressures of everyday life simply because they don't live there. They cannot demonstrate how to handle the tension between discipleship and working full-time or how to integrate work and witness or how to live for God in every aspect of life.

The "full-time" model also communicates a negative story. Only full-timers have the time, the training, and the special call to do much ministry. Everyday Christians cannot do that much. Worse, since doing ministry is the primary source of value, their work is devalued as "secular." Most Christians have no idea of how their work is supposed to serve God.

This implies that the gospel doesn't really work in everyday life; it doesn't speak to all of life. It only works for full-time Christians. This thinking has traded the whole gospel taken by the whole church for a shriveled gospel taken by the select few.

But, great news! The apostle Paul and his co-workers proved that the whole gospel works for the whole church in all of life. Paul integrated work and discipleship in all of life as an everyday Christian. He worked full-time to support himself while taking the gospel to the ancient world. So did his co-workers.*

So did real tentmakers throughout history and so they do today.

Christianity traveled through businessmen, soldiers, students, teachers, refugees, pilgrims, doctors, lawyers, prisoners, slaves and hostages, Christian lay people of all kinds: bearers of the Christian message as they traveled. So largely, expansion was not the work of pastors, but of Christian men and women in their ordinary routines of life.

— David Wright (condensed)

Gladys Aylward won Chinese to Christ by how she served, loved, and shared the gospel in her inn. She won the respect of the local Mandarin so that he made her the area foot-inspector to enforce the new law ending foot-binding. This gave her great influence for good as well as opportunity for witness.

Today, tentmakers model the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world. "Rob" has been negotiating contracts with local headmen for a company in a Muslim country. His character, his work and his care for people including children led his driver to tell him one day that he had figured out that Rob was a "man of God." Rob asked him to keep this quiet. But when they met with the next headman, he introduced Rob as "a man of God." Surrounded by his entourage and local villagers, the head man told Rob, "Tell us a story about God." Really frightened, he figured he might as well go for it. So beginning in Genesis, he told about God's working in history and about Jesus. When he finished, the headman said, "Now that was a story! I want you to tell this to all my people whenever you come." As a result, people began coming to Christ and churches have developed and spread throughout this unreached people group.

Biblical tentmaking makes it normative for all Christians to make disciples, live devout lives, serve God in all of life, and reach out to those different from themselves. Tentmakers fill a gaping hole in present day missions demonstrating the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world. Many thousands more are needed to rebuild this primary pattern in the church. It is hard to overstate the impact everyday Christians can have by becoming effective tentmakers.

*See 2 Th. 3:6-10 where Paul refers to Silvanus, Timothy and himself twelve times as "we," "us," and "our." For a fuller treatment, see "Why Did Paul Make Tents?" and "New Millennium Missions.")

What GO Courses Do to People

Global Opportunities has been running our GO Equipped! tentmaking courses for over 10 years now. They do things for people and they do things to them.

It gets them over the hump.

Those who've been considering tentmaking begin to imagine themselves actually doing it. They begin to see themselves actually finding a job overseas, leaving their job here, living and connecting with the people, and opening their hearts and home to them.

R & D attended a course in Victoria, BC, Canada and started seriously searching for teaching jobs. About a year later they began teaching in an international school in Beirut.

Michelle just attended our Pasadena course in October and is heading to Asia later this year to teach.

It gives them understanding of how everyday Christians can do ministry. It provides a new Biblical model of work-faith integration which leads to their saying, "Aha. I could do that!"

MB had been a tentmaker in Uzbekistan. Then an incredible door opened to one of the most oppressive and needy countries on earth. But he was scared he could not share Christ there. Ari and I both urged him on and he accepted the invitation. On his way there, he made time to attend our course in Pasadena. It helped him gain insight into how he could witness even there and he has had remarkable impact.

It refocuses them and opens new windows.

Sergio & Angela were heading to Thailand to serve in a children's home. They had a great heart to serve even though this required support funds. At a Fort Myers course, they saw a whole new perspective and Sergio ended up using his science and engineering skills to teach in a high school in Thailand.

Chris came to a Pasadena course after serving as a missionary in Thailand. With strong people and teaching gifts, he saw the power of using them in tentmaking, earned a PhD and returned to Thailand to teach English.

It equips them to be effective by focusing on core principles and ministry skills.

Jon & his wife attended the course in Dallas. In late summer they moved to India to start an outsourcing business which employs both believers and non-believers. His leadership has improved employees' work habits and helped some to Christ. He said that "The course must have been developed out of years of experience in the field. I still draw on it—the importance of jumping right into the culture, living out what I believe during day-to-day business, of opening up the home... I could go on. The course was truly sent by God at just the right time..."

It gets them overseas as tentmakers. Around 50% end up overseas. Coming can be dangerous!

Focusing Our Mission - Go, make disciples!

Jesus did not command us to make converts, but disciples. He does not need fans or votes.

He wants followers who are genuinely committed to him.

This changes everything in how we evaluate the church. Imagine Jesus talking with a "successful" pastor about how his church is doing. (Mt. 28:18-20 NIV)

Jesus: "How is your church doing?"

Pastor: "Oh, we are very excited. We have 2000 coming and are still growing! And over 100 came to Christ last year."

Jesus: "That is wonderful. But how many are real disciples who obey all that I commanded?"

Pastor: "Well, we provide many opportunities for discipleship—Sunday school classes, recovery groups, support groups, special training events..."

Jesus: "Yes, that is good. But how many disciples do you have who obey all that I commanded?"

Pastor: "We offer discipleship classes for anyone interested. Over the years, hundreds have attended. Our youth are very involved. Also, hundreds of members have gone on missions trips in the last five years."

Jesus: "I'm glad to hear this. But how many disciples do you have who obey all that I commanded?"

Christ counts people differently. He did not call us to convert people and then disciple them or follow them up. He called us to a single task—make disciples! He expects those who come to him to follow him in growing obedience. He assumes they are supernaturally changed by the Spirit.

Perhaps the reason some show little desire to follow Christ is that they were never born again. They never heard an accurate understanding of the message. They responded to what they heard, but never understood that Jesus' Lordship is the issue, that coming to him means surrendering to him, and that what he offers is pardon for rebellion and supernatural power to follow him as Lord.

Making disciples begins with accurately explaining the good news, inviting people to surrender and receive Christ's incredible pardon and power and begin a life of following him. "Repent" and "believe" are the key requirements for coming to Christ in the gospels. They are two sides of the same coin. Coming to Christ is the great reversal from self-rule to glad surrender to him as Lord (repenting) and as Savior from his judgment and from slavery to sin (believing). Making this message clear leads to surrender, new birth, and obedience to Christ—the first step in becoming a disciple.

What do we teach disciples? To obey everything Jesus commanded. This covers every aspect of life—loving God, marriage, sex, money, status, power, praying, forgiving, fasting, trials, persecution, work, loving enemies, and the rest. And Jesus calls us to inner obedience, transforming our thinking as well as our actions. The Sermon on the Mount is the most concentrated, intensive exposition of Jesus' teaching and a great starting point for discipling. This is what the early Church focused on. Also, since Christ fully practiced everything he taught, we simply need to copy him.

How do we disciple into Christ-likeness and obedience? We cannot organize it through programs. We cannot do it by mere preaching. "Discipling" by teaching classes only trains people to teach classes. We can only transfer it by living it to inspire others to imitate. Paul said, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." (1 Co. 11:1) He affirmed this over and over—1 Co. 4:16, 1 Th. 1:6, 2 Th. 3:6-10, Ac. 20:33-35, Ph. 3:17, 1 Tim. 4:12, Tit. 2:7. Why? Because, as George Patterson says, "People are apers." They are always imitating someone—mother, father, friend, hero, idol, etc.

People copy what others do, not what they merely say. When we teach, but do not practice, people see what we really think and do and copy that.

They cannot really understand or believe what we say if they never see it work. Paul knew this is how people work, so he lived the truth and called Christians to imitate him. Godliness is more caught than taught.

When I began working at Johns Hopkins University, the Christians could not believe two things: 1) that they could seek God's kingdom first and still be good students, and 2) that God could bring students to himself on that tough, secular campus. But they agreed that God had called them to this and that they would begin to take small steps of obedience. Little by little they began to take time for personal Bible study and prayer, for group discipleship, for praying together, for relationships with nonbelievers. I modeled these things in my own life, though imperfectly. They began taking small steps to pray for friends, to talk with them about Jesus, to see how God would work, and to lead seeker Bible studies.

Gradually, they began to put God's interests first and discovered he still enabled them to be good students. In fact, they became better students. They also saw a few friends come to Christ and begin following him. They had thought these were impossible, but they took little steps of faith into the impossible and found that God worked. In a couple of years these students saw it as "normal" to put God first and do well as students and to be used of God to lead others to Jesus.

But it was much easier for the next wave of students who joined the group. They too did not believe they could set God's kingdom first and that God would empower their studies, nor did they believe God could save students at JHU. But they saw these in action and very quickly realized it was possible. They grew much more quickly and easily because they could see and copy those who had gone before.

To describe this in a series of steps, disciple-making requires:

1. Internalization – We cannot teach what we do not know nor can we transfer it to others. Internalize Christ's mind and commands into your life so that you can show and teach others the way.
2. Incarnation – Demonstrate in your life, thought and words how to follow Christ so that people can see and imitate, and are inspired to do so.
3. Affiliation – Invite responsive people to join you in following Jesus in a small group. Jesus called the 12 to be with him. Paul focused on church leaders and co-workers. So gather the teachable to grow, love, and follow Christ together.
4. Impartation – Pour yourself into this core group as Jesus did in teaching, coaching, loving, living life, and serving together including making disciples. Lead them in studying the Bible to learn Christ's mind and commands, and in doing what you learn from him.

Consciously study and obey him in all aspects of life as cited above. Don't allow mere academic study.

5. Delegation – Coach and mentor the group in sharing their faith, leading seeker Bible studies, discipling those who respond, and building ongoing communities of Christ-followers or churches. This does not mean complex, institutional churches with buildings, bulletins, worship bands, formal sermons, etc., just simple gatherings of people following Christ together and making disciples.

Individuals will develop greater gifts and insights into certain aspects of life than you or others. Affirm them and empower them to help the church to grow and obey in these areas.

In brief, disciple-making means incarnating obedience and Christ-likeness in every aspect of life and instilling that into teachable people by loving them and having them join you in following and serving Christ together based on Scripture. There are many implications to think through, so keep thinking and learning.

Do tentmakers really plant churches?

Many think that tentmakers only play a complimentary role of assisting "real" missionaries as if tentmakers are not full-fledged mission workers. As a result, many tentmakers don't plant churches because they don't aim to. Paul, the apostle, and his co-workers, proved this by planting many churches as self-supporting, everyday Christians.

In fact, Paul deliberately chose "lay" strategy of working for his living to set a pattern of every Christian being a disciple-maker and of everyday Christians giving leadership and planting churches. This is why the early church spread so fast. This was no super feat of a spiritual superman.

Tentmaking in Scripture

"Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians...You yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow." - 2 Th 1:1;3:7-9

The Ultimate Goal of Missions

When "Robert" first went to the "Yanyin" region of China in 1991, he found 3 house churches and 85 Han Chinese Christians in a region of among 7 million people and 5 people groups. After surveying the region, he began mobilizing Chinese co-laborers and planting churches with them in 1994. Just three year later, the number of churches had grown to 195 in number and spread throughout the region, taking root in all five people groups. Robert describes his church planting strategy as POUCH: Participative Bible study/worship groups; Obedience to God's word as a the measure of success; Unpaid and multiple lay or bi-vocational church leaders; Cell churches rarely exceeding 15 members before starting new groups; and Homes or store-fronts as primary meeting places for these cell churches. Robert would first model "doing church" with new believers using the POUCH approach. Then he would assist them to plant a daughter church.

Third, he'd watch to see that they started a third-generation church without his involvement. Then he would leave--the crucial final step to ensure an indigenous, self-propagating movement.

The ultimate goal of missions is to plant self-multiplying, self-nurturing, self-led, self-supporting (Great Commission) churches of genuine disciples capable of evangelizing their own people and also reaching other peoples. Where an indigenous church already exists, our task is to integrate new believers into it, and to help it be the kind of church just described. Why is this the ultimate goal? Because Jesus commands us to "make disciples...[who] obey everything I have commanded."

As soon as two or more turn to Christ, they are transformed and called to love each other as Christ has loved them. (Jn. 15:12) God is building a new family. This means simple house churches, not complex, organizational churches. This is something that committed, everyday, workplace Christians can do, with a little preparation.

Everyday, workplace Christians (tentmakers) did it then; they are doing it today! The full Commission belongs to every Christian, not just to "full-time" missionaries. God does not relegate any Christian to second-class status, nor to any reduction of their God-given role! As Jesus left for heaven, he said, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given unto me. Go therefore..." With the command, he promised his power. Tentmakers can! They just need training and experience to develop skill. This is a core component of Global Opportunities' GO Equipped! Course.

Sources: Church Planting Movements by David Garrison (published by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention). Pages 16-19. Order for free or copy from http://www.imb.org/globalresearch/CPM/what_is_a_cpm.htm.

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"Christians are better than other people"

After three years of hard work and Bible teaching, a tentmaker serving in Asia was speaking at a house church meeting. - It is true that Christians are better than other people, isn't it? the tentmaker asked.

The tentmaker was surprised to see people in the congregation starting to nod their heads in agreement. After a few clarifying questions, he realized that what he had tried to teach people throughout the last years had been in vain. The believers in this mid-sized Central Asian city really believed that they were morally superior to others in the society.

"If I could have done it over again and retrained the believers, I would have done things in a very different way," the tentmaker stated a few years after finishing his job in the former Soviet republic. With a lack of knowledge on how to train disciples, the tentmaker focused on Bible teaching and systematic theology.

"For all Christians it is valuable to have a profound knowledge of the Bible, but I understood too late that many of the people I taught did not apply the Biblical message to their own lives. As a result, their lives were not changed," states the tentmaker.

What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ in my life, at my workplace and in my neighborhood? This is one of the most central questions when it comes to discipleship training. Unfortunately the Biblical message remains head knowledge for many of us, and thus our lives are not changed according to the Scripture. Theological issues, and not the transformation of lives, also remain the focus in many churches.

Jesus called us to make disciples of all nations. In the four Gospels we read how he trained his disciples, concentrating on the few people he knew would be able to teach others. And he focused much of his teaching on everyday challenges and principles in the Kingdom of God.

There is no doubt that a tentmaker can be a good disciple-maker. A tentmaker works and lives under the same conditions as the people he or she has come to train. In this way a tentmaker, like Paul, the tentmaker from Tarsus, can model what it means to follow Jesus in everyday life.

It is said that when we aim at nothing, we hit it every time. If we don't know what the aim of our discipleship training is, we will probably fail. Dawson Trotman, the founder of Navigators, has given us the following guideline that can be of help: "A person is mature physiologically when he or she can reproduce physically; so too, a person is mature spiritually when he or she can reproduce spiritually."

Read more about making disciples in the Discipleship Journal, published by Navpress www.navpress.com/dj

Will the US keep up with the rest of the world?

A focused group of 10 students showed up when Global Opportunities re-launched the organization's tentmaking course in Pasadena in October. Nevertheless, the US can be left behind as the worldwide tentmaking train is gaining speed and bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth.

The US has been a driving force in the worldwide mission movement. In the same way, Global Opportunities has been a pioneer in developing modern tentmaking. Hundreds of overseas workplace witnesses have received their training through GO's courses. But nine years into the new millennium, the American tentmaking train has to gain new speed if the US wants to maintain a leading role in what is happening.

In collaboration with its European partner, Tent, GO is now running annual tentmaking courses on three continents. The training that has been developed by the GO-Tent alliance is also used in other countries. On the African continent it is estimated that 1000 professionals will take the course in 2009. The courses in the US are outnumbered by similar events in Canada, Mali, Norway and Uganda. One thing that is admirable with Americans is their competitive attitude. Americans want to be world leaders and in many areas they are. Hopefully the same attitude can bring the US back as one of the major locomotives in the worldwide movement of tentmakers. The next chance for Americans to jump on the train and get the basic training is the GO Equipped TENTmaking course in Fort Myers, Florida in February of next year.

Nike won the world as a leading manufacturer for sports shoes and clothing. If you want to contribute in winning the world for Jesus as an international workplace witness, the course in Florida is a good starting point. Why not follow Nike's slogan, book your tickets to Florida immediately and "Just do it"? You can register for the course here.

Why believe in Business as Mission?

The Business as Mission (BAM) movement has become a fast growing flower in God's garden. But not all rapidly growing seedlings will last for a long time.

So what will happen to the Business as Mission companies? Will we still talk about BAM 50 years from now? Of course only God knows what the future will look like and his foolishness is wiser than the wisdom of the humans (1 Cor 1.) Still it is possible to say something about the strengths and weaknesses of the BAM-strategy.

BAM strengths

Let us look at the strengths first. Here are a number of reasons why Business as Mission is a very relevant strategy for bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth:

1. Business people are welcomed everywhere.

Nearly all countries will give visas to clever business people who will contribute to building up their society. In several of the countries where the Gospel is least known, there is a great need for business entrepreneurs who can bring about the creation of new workplaces. According to estimates from the World Bank, 2.6 billion people today have to survive on less than \$2 per day. 1.4 billion people have an income lower than \$1.25 per day. Within the next 20 years, two billion people will be born in societies where there are few churches and few jobs. It was God's intention that everyone should work. If we have no job to go to and our skills are not in demand in society, we will very easily lose our dignity. God rejoices when business people use their skills and help people to get their dignity back.

2. Business people are welcomed in all layers of society.

A man who served as a missionary in an African country for more than a decade, decided to start an import-export business when he moved to a new place. Now he is testifying how all doors opened for him after he started his business.

3. God has always used business people to bring the gospel forward.

The Bible tells us that all but the apostles had to leave Jerusalem due to the persecution after the killing of Stephen (Acts 7). Many of those who left were craftsmen and women. The book of Acts tells us that those who were scattered planted new churches in the places where they settled. Gary Goodhew, a retired Anglican bishop, has concluded that «in the earliest history of the Christian mission the saving news of Christ was often carried to new places by those who were seeking to do business.»

4. Business leaders are people of influence.

Some years ago a tentmaker went to Greenland to run a shipping business. The business soon became the biggest tax payer in the local community. Because of his contribution to the society, the tentmaker was able to connect on a personal level with the municipal leaders.

BAM challenges

There are also some common reasons why some Business as Mission companies fail.

1. The founders/leaders don't know how to run a company.

Some Christians have seen the BAM-model as an entry strategy to countries that do not issue visas to missionaries.

Without any business skills, the people involved try to set up a viable company. However, due to lack of knowledge on how to run a company, the business fails.

2. Stigma of business

Related to the first problem is the attitude that business work is not real work for God.

Some people think that as soon as they've managed to register a business they can use as a visa platform, they'll spend as little time as possible running the business, and as much time as possible on evangelism. Anyone thinking like this will probably not succeed in his or her business. The attitude will also often discredit the name of Jesus. When the authorities see that the persons involved are not doing the job they promised, they conclude that Christians are people who do not keep their word.

3. Hostile authorities are becoming more aware of the BAM model

It is not only the Christian business people who know about the BAM way of working.

Authorities in countries that are hostile towards the Gospel also have up to date knowledge about BAM. In many places they keep track of what the business managers are doing. This causes problems both to the businesses and to the local believers who are getting involved.

Conclusion

The BAM companies come in all shapes and sizes. Within the BAM family you find everything from one person companies making very little money to multi-national businesses with profits of millions of dollars. Together the BAM companies form a colorful flower. Let's pray for God to raise up good BAM leaders and models so this movement now and in the future will have maximum impact for God's kingdom.

God moving into the neighborhood

From time to time The Message is just brilliant in the way it has paraphrased some of the texts in the Bible. John 1:14 (MSG) says:

"The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood."

Anyone who is involved in tentmaking will from time to time be asked what tentmaking is all about. The simple answer is this: It is all about God moving into the neighborhood. By sending Christian professionals to work in other countries and places, God's kingdom is established in new neighborhoods all over the world.

A few years ago Barna research surveyed why people come to Christ. According to their statistics most people become believers because they have a close relationship to someone who knows Jesus.

Workplaces and neighborhoods are wonderful places for making contacts with new people. These relationships are creating highways along which the Gospel can travel.

Unfortunately other surveys show that many believers often spend most of their time hanging out with other people who are already followers of Jesus. In this way great opportunities for sharing the Gospel are lost.

One married couple once decided to make changes in their lives in order to build friendships with more people who didn't know Christ. They promised each other that they would make sure that 50 per cent of the people who came to their home would be those who had no faith in Jesus. The decision caused huge changes. First they had to stop inviting their Christian friends. And then they had to befriend people who had little or no knowledge about Jesus.

In the US many non-profit organizations are writing "End of the Year" appeals asking people to support their ministry. Global Opportunities would like to give you a "Beginning of the Year" appeal as you are reading this.

First, we will challenge you to write down the names of friends with whom you have regular contact. As you look at the list, ask yourself if you should befriend more people who do not know Jesus Christ in order to introduce them to him.

Second, we would like you to look at the map below showing where in the world the Gospel is least known. We ask you to prayerfully consider if there are any new places God is asking you to go so that he will be able to move through you into some new neighborhoods.

FIFA World Cup and the global job market

Regardless of who the winner will be, the FIFA World Cup taking place in South Africa is giving us valuable insights into the global job market.

12 (37.5%) of the 32 teams playing in South Africa have non-native coaches. Coaches from Argentina are heading three teams. The number of German coaches is also three. Other nations who have for-hire coaches in the World Cup are Brazil, France, Italy, Netherlands, Serbia and Sweden.

There are many things we can learn from this list regarding the global job market. Here are some points:

1. Sports is a growing sector in the international job market

For most nations it is important to perform well at the big sports events. In order to achieve this, the national teams look for the best coaches available. Many nations have realized that they need to start growing their athletes early if they want to succeed. So there is a desire to hire good, foreign coaches also further down in the sports hierarchy in each nation. Other growing sports sectors are the fitness clubs and personal coaching for anyone who would like to get in better shape.

2. Foreign employers look for experts

Except for Serbia and Sweden all the nations listed above are famous for their good soccer teams. Employers hiring people from the global job market are looking for experts. The better you are in your profession, the easier it is to get a job. Since it is usually expensive to hire foreign experts, the employers would like you to pass on your knowledge to the local staff.

As soon as possible they will try to manage without your expertise.

3. If you do not produce the desired results, your contract will end

The non-successful soccer trainers will not have their contracts renewed. The same applies to experts in other professions who do not produce the desired results.

If you want to stay long term in another country you'll have to work hard and you need to make sure that you stay on top of your profession.

The list of World Cup coaches also gives us some other interesting facts. Seven of them are in their forties, 14 are in their fifties, 10 are in their sixties and one is more than 70 years old. Notice that none are in their twenties or thirties. The Western job market often fails to value gray hair and experience. Many non-western job markets do.

Conclusions

1. There is a constant demand for experts in the global job market. We should all aim at being as good as possible in our professions. This makes us more attractive in the marketplace.

It is also a Biblical principle to make good use of the talents God has given us.

2. We should always try to give our employer the maximum return for the investment he has made by employing us. Equally those registering and starting businesses in other countries should do their best to make their businesses a blessing to the nation they are living in.

3. There is a great need for more gray-haired Christian professionals who are willing to bring their professions and experience with them to other countries.

Tentmaking and national laws

"Should Christians Convert Muslims?" was the headline of a Time Magazine cover story a few years ago. In some sense the article implied that Christians going to Muslim countries are doing something wrong because their activities are causing tensions. But is that true?

Among the politically correct only the religion of tolerance is accepted. Christians settling in other countries in order to lead people to Jesus are under attack. Even among Christians, tentmakers working in sensitive areas may be met with criticism. The conception is that a tentmaker often comes with a hidden agenda and that he or she are entering the nations through the backdoor.

In this picture it is important to sort out what is right and what is wrong. First of all we should underline that Global Opportunities and Tent are training people to respect the laws of the countries they are going to. When it comes to sharing faith, the laws in most nations are not causing too much trouble.

With maybe one or two exceptions, no countries in the world have laws against people talking about their faith in a private setting. In most non-Western cultures religion is an integral part of daily life. So it is common to talk about faith and share thoughts about the big questions of life in day-to-day talks. In fact, it is socially expected to talk about your faith when asked. It is inappropriate not to. Getting people to ask questions is key to sharing Christ. This creates many opportunities for sharing about Jesus also in nations that are regarded as "closed" for the Gospel.

A Christian who had lived in Pakistan for several years, testified that he did not have the gift of evangelism. "But in Pakistan I didn't need that gift. There people talk about faith all the time," he concluded.

Many nations have laws that makes it illegal for the citizens to change their religion. So the people the tentmakers are living among, break the law if they accept Jesus as their saviour. Many of those who receive the gift of salvation and eternal life through Jesus, realize that the suffering they may have to face here on earth is nothing compared to the glory they will receive (Rom 8:18). The tentmaker may of course be considered as a partner in crime to those who break the law by changing their faith. But in this case the authorities who prohibit their citizens from having the freedom of belief are the ones to blame. It should also be mentioned that many of the countries prohibiting religious conversions have signed the declaration on human rights giving everyone the right to "change his religion or belief." (UN Declaration on Human Rights, Article 18).

No missionary, nor any tentmaker, will force anyone to follow their faith. What these ambassadors of God's kingdom are doing, is to point towards a man who said he had come to restore our relationship with God. In nations where exchange of ideas and beliefs is prohibited, even the politically correct should aim their criticism at the authorities who are denying their people basic human rights. Those who share their faith with others should not be the target.

Note: Dave English, Executive Director of Global Opportunities was interviewed for the above mentioned TIME article.

Top ten tentmaking benefits

Here are the top ten reasons why I believe tentmaking is a fruitful way of doing ministry.

1. The whole gospel

God is interested in the fullness of our lives, not just in our spiritual activities. One of the first callings God gave to us as humans was to "work and take care of" the garden that he had planted (Gen 2:15). The garden was that day's society. The calling to us is the same as it was for Adam and Eve. God still wants us to work and take care of the society that he has created.

2. The whole world - part one

Today nearly all of the people groups that are least reached with the gospel live in countries that do not issue visas to missionaries. Tentmakers can go to all nations. That's one of the reasons why tentmaking is called "The ministry of the open doors".

3. The whole world - part two

Friendships and relationships are two key channels that God uses to lead new people to the salvation in Jesus Christ. In a workplace new relationships between those who know Jesus and those who do not know him are created in a natural way. As everyday ambassadors for Christ we can point towards the one who gave us a new life. The Irish evangelist Gypsy Smith said "there are five Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the Christian. Some people will never read the first four."

4. The whole church

There are two very common ways people respond when they attend our seminars on tentmaking. One group of people say that they never thought their skills or their profession could be used in mission. The idea of tentmaking makes it possible for them to be directly involved in advancing the gospel. Others say that they don't think they'll go overseas. But they have gotten a new vision on how their faith can be integrated into their daily lives in their workplaces and elsewhere.

5. Building the nations

As tentmakers we are using our professional skills to build the nations. God wants us to repair the broken walls and restore the streets (Isa 58:12). In many of the nations where the Gospel is little known the unemployment rate is very high. In these areas God is in a special way calling Christian business people to create viable workplaces and at the same time model what businesses based on Biblical principles look like.

6. Modeling

A tentmaker lives under the same conditions as the ones he or she works with. In this way a tentmaker can model what it means to live out faith in Jesus in daily life.

7. Influencing

Western professionals are usually hired as experts. This gives them influence beyond professional knowledge. Western tentmakers and business people often have good connections even at the highest levels of society.

8. Using your skills

God has designed us in different ways. Tentmakers can use both their professional and personal skills to glorify him.

9. Working in Season

The Bible tells us that there is a time for sowing and a time for reaping. If our only aim is to lead lost souls to Jesus, we may feel that we fail if we come to a mission field where we mostly are sowing. In such tough circumstances the joy of the professional job we are doing can help us to preserve.

10. Tentmaking works

After traveling and working in the huge area between Jerusalem and Illyria for some years, the apostle Paul concludes that "there is no more place for me to work in these regions." (Rom 15,23). Paul has worked as a tentmaker, he has modeled how to integrate faith and work, he has led people to Christ and he has appointed other working people as heads of the churches that have been started. Now he sees that the good news about God's kingdom is carried onwards by Christians living out their faith in their everyday lives.

10 year anniversary for GO's European sister agency

- Without the close collaboration with Global Opportunities, we would never have come as far as we have in 10 years, says Steinar Opheim, the managing director of the Norwegian based resource center for tentmaking called Tent.

In November Tent (the word "tent" in Norwegian means "on fire") celebrates its 10 year anniversary by arranging a tentmaking tour in the biggest cities of Norway. 60 people were present at the foundation meeting ten years ago. The main speaker at that event was GO's international director, Ari Rocklin.

- Throughout these 10 years GO has been of tremendous help to Tent. For instance GO gave us a head start by sharing all the tentmaking and business as mission resources they had developed, comments Steinar Opheim.

In 2003 Dave English and Ari Rocklin came to Bergen to teach at the first ever GO Equipped Tentmaking course in Norway. At that time the course was named "Light to the Nations". Since then Tent has arranged 10 tentmaking courses in Norway. The course in Bergen has become an international event. The 2010-course was attended by people from ten nations.

Since 2005 Steinar Opheim has been teaching at the GO Equipped courses in US and Canada. The same year Tent brought the tentmaking teaching developed by GO and Tent to Mali in Africa. Under the leadership of Tentmakers International's Tiowa Diarra the tentmaking movement in Africa has gained strength, and the GO/Tent-course is now spread to the majority of the African nations. This summer's All Africa tentmaking conference gathered people from 20 nations.

- We are grateful for the way God has been using Tent these 10 years. In the years to come we'll work hard to get even better in recruiting, training and following up tentmakers. We believe that tentmakers are one of the main work forces God will use to reach all nations with the Gospel, says Steinar Opheim.

Serve God by doing what you like

What does a little boy bringing food to Jesus and a European comedy show have to do with tentmaking?

The boy who came with bread and fish to Jesus was too small to be a professional himself. Probably he had not even prepared the food he is bringing in front of Jesus.

Still a drawing of this little, faithful young man has become an illustration for the GO Equipped TENTmaking courses that are run several places in the world. The main reason for this is that the boy is making what he has available for Jesus in order for the Lord to use it. And because he has this attitude, he and the others present become witnesses of one of the greatest miracles the world has ever seen.

God's calling to all of us is to bring what we have in front of him so that it can be of use to him. That also includes our professions.

God and desires

It is probably not by chance that you chose the profession you did. God has designed us in different ways. His design also defines what we are interested in. And our interests will again direct us when it comes to choice of profession.

Many people are concerned about what God's will for their life is. A good way of finding the answer is to ask what interests the Lord has given to you and what you would like to work with. God is not a father that gives us desires and interests in order to test if we are willing to sacrifice everything to follow him. He usually wants us to use his gifts to glorify him.

A Bible school teacher working for a conservative, Lutheran school in Europe once said that his standard reply to young students seeking the Lord's will for their lives was as follows: "Until God shows you something else, you should think that he wants you to do and work with whatever you like the most."

This may of course sound like self-fulfillment, but it isn't. As believers we have a calling to develop our God given gifts in order to glorify him. If our aim becomes to glorify ourselves, we have missed the point.

Move your skills

When it comes to tentmaking and Business as Mission, you are not asked to leave your profession to serve God. The question is whether you are willing to bring your skills and God given gifts with you to another culture in order to be God's ambassador there? If your answer is yes or maybe, you should consider attending one of the upcoming GO Equipped TENTmaking courses

Let us go back to the little boy bringing food to Jesus. A few years ago some European comedians made a TV-show where they pretended that they were teaching people to prepare food. They had bought five loaves of bread and two fishes. Then they held a Bible in front of the camera saying: "According to this book this will be enough food for 5000 people." Everyone laughed, but of course the recipe was not right. They had forgotten the most important ingredient: God's blessing.

When we bring our professions and what else we have in front of God, he can use it for his purpose, and he can make us a blessing to many nations. (Gen 12)

"Huge increase in American tentmakers"

The US is sending out more tentmakers today than ever before according to statistics from US mission agencies.

From 2005 to 2008 the number of tentmakers deployed by US agencies grew a dramatic 73.4 percent, an annual growth of 20.1 percent, writes professor A. Scott Moreau in the latest issue of International Bulletin of Missionary Research (IBMR).

Figures in the bulletin show that 3,354 US citizens were serving overseas as tentmakers in 2008. Ten years earlier the number of tentmakers was 1,853.

Overall fifty-nine agencies reported more tentmakers than in 2005, while sixty-two agencies reported fewer, writes Moreau.

Unclear definitions

This is great news and it is wonderful to see that so many agencies make more use of tentmakers in their work. At the same time the IBMR-article raises some crucial questions regarding the nature of the tentmakers reported.

Certainly one advantage to agencies in a tighter economy is that tentmakers can earn at least a part of their salary through their employment or business ventures, states Moreau. This indicates that many of the tentmakers in the statistic cannot live by the money they make and are therefore partly supported by their sending agencies.

The title "tentmaker" is not protected in any way, and anyone who wants to may call themselves tentmakers. Often we hear people describing themselves as tentmakers even when they work and live in their own culture. As long as this label is helping people to gain an identity of being God's ambassadors where they are this is very well. Then God's kingdom is made known in new circles and more people are led to Christ.

Great advantages

In the GO-Tent alliance however we promote tentmakers as people crossing cultural borders in order to bring the gospel onwards through their professional work. Most of the people we work with are fully supported through their jobs or through the businesses they have created. There are several advantages to this way of doing tentmaking. Here are some of them:

- When you get your full salary from your job you live under the same conditions as the people around you. Thus you can model what it means to follow Jesus Christ in a common, everyday life.
- Through your work you'll get in touch with a lot of people in a natural way.
- No one needs to ask you where you are getting money from since you have your full salary from your work.
- All nations are open to Christian professionals. Even countries that are closed to missions have a desire to recruit skilled, Christian workers.

The most sad part of GO's and Tents jobs as tentmaking mobilizers is to face the fact that we are unable to find workers for so many of the wonderful job openings we get information about in places where Christ's love is not known. Maybe it is time for you to sign up?

181 new house churches planted by tentmakers

African tentmakers who have gone through the tentmaking course developed by Global Opportunities and Tent have started at least 181 new prayer groups and house churches the past six years.

According to detailed reports presented by Africa-director Tiowa Diarra in Tentmakers International (TI), 3,751 persons have now gone through a limited version of the GO Equipped TENTmaking course. The course participants have reached out to 15,100 people with the gospel and 181 new, Christian fellowships have been started.

- We are still missing reports from several nations, so the real numbers of people being reached and fellowships being started is even higher than this, says Tiowa Diarra.

He has been a leading figure in the African tentmaking movement that has been emerging the past six years. In 2004 he made connections with Global Opportunities European sister agency, Tent, in order to arrange a tentmaking course in his home country Mali. Since then the development of the movement has been like an adventure. In 2007 Mali hosted the first ever All Africa Tentmaking conference with participants from 17 nations. The second All Africa Tentmaking conference was held in Cameroon last summer. At present TI has national representatives in the majority of the African nations.

The tentmaking course has been recorded in both French and English and is now distributed on DVDs to the national leaders in the movement.

- The tentmaking strategy is a good fit for the churches in Africa. Through tentmaking even churches that have small resources can take part in the worldwide mission task, says Tiowa Diarra.

He is now making plans for a third All Africa Tentmaking conference that will be held in Tanzania in 2013.

- By arranging these international events in different parts of the continent, we can introduce even more people to the tentmaking idea, says Tiowa Diarra.

Risk management for tentmakers

The UN has just published a new report focusing on risk management for humanitarian workers. The document contains much valuable information also for tentmakers and business as mission people working in sensitive areas.

Humanitarian workers are under threat as ever before according to the UN report named "To stay and deliver". The report says that the number of lethal attacks on humanitarian workers have tripled the past years. Currently an average of 100 workers are killed on the job every year.

The situation is worst in Afghanistan where there have been 180 major attacks on humanitarian workers since 2005. Sudan (150 attacks) and Somalia (100 attacks) follow as number two and three.

- There are no places where humanitarian organizations should not go or cannot go. Instead of asking what does it take to leave, we should ask what does it take to stay in Mazar-i-Sharif and other such places. Risk management means you adapt to the circumstances, said Jan Egeland when the report was presented in New York in the middle of April. Egeland who is the director of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, has led the research group behind the UN report.

The report contains information on best practices for agencies working in conflict areas. Many tentmakers are involved in such relief work. The content is also valuable for tentmakers and business people operating in such areas. For instance it is underlining how important it is to develop plans for security including evacuation plans.

The World's Mission Leaders Want Focus on Tentmaking

"Christians in many skills, trades, businesses and professions, can often go to places where traditional church planters and evangelists may not," concludes the worldwide Lausanne Movement in the recently published Cape Town Commitment. The document may bring tentmaking into a new era in the global mission work.

For nearly 40 years the Lausanne Movement has been a major source of inspiration and a substantial contributor in the worldwide mission work. The Lausanne Covenant that was worked out during the world congress in 1974 has been a point of reference for nearly everyone involved in mission. The Manila Manifesto written in 1989 also contributed in forming a common understanding of the mission task among global leaders. It is therefore good reason to expect that also the document that was made during the world congress in Cape Town last fall will make its impact on the mission work in the years and decades to come.

The Cape Town Commitment concludes that tentmaking is a vital strategy if we want to reach the whole world with the whole gospel. The document therefore advises church and mission leaders to implement tentmaking in their strategies.

"We urge church leaders to understand the strategic impact of ministry in the workplace and to mobilize, equip and send out their church members as missionaries into the workplace, both in their own local communities and in countries that are closed to traditional forms of gospel witness. We urge mission leaders to integrate 'tentmakers' fully into the global missional strategy," reads the document. You can download the full version of the Cape Town Commitment in several languages from Lausanne's website at www.lausanne.org.

"The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World" has been a motto for the Lausanne Movement. In *Global Opportunities and Tent* we have seen how the teaching on tentmaking is empowering the whole congregation to take part in the global mission task.

When we run seminars on tentmaking in the churches, people usually respond in two ways. One groups says that for the first time they will really consider to move to a new country in order be ambassadors for God's kingdom.

They have never thought of becoming missionaries. But applying for a job where they can continue to use their professions in a new culture sounds like something they could do. The other group says that they will still not consider moving abroad, but they've got a new vision on how they can serve God in their workplace at home.

Global Opportunities and Tent are ready to serve churches, mission agencies and private persons who want the gospel to be known in the whole world. Don't hesitate to contact us to find out how we can work together to fulfill the Great Commission.

Don't Let Your eMails Get You in Trouble

The tentmaker in the Central Asian nation was shocked when he received the email from the senior pastor in his home church. "To Our Missionary Heroes" was the headline of the email. The same greeting was also used in the subject field.

The email was sent to all the missionaries that the church was in contact with and the pastor wanted to encourage these front soldiers in God's army. Most of them were working in areas where they could openly share the Gospel. But this tentmaker was not. Although he immediately deleted the email, he knew that it could cause harm to the ministry he had been doing for several years.

Emails and other data communication have become major sources that can harm a growing work in a sensitive area. The people who want to stay in touch with us are not trained in thinking about security. Even the people who are working in such areas are often not aware of the security issues that can harm their work.

Global Opportunities and Tent have together with current tentmakers developed some security guidelines for people working in areas where the Christian church is persecuted. Here are some of the advices we give regarding emails:

- Remember that unencrypted emails are like postcards – everyone can read them. Thus we should never write things that can harm our work.
- Avoid writing about politics and religion.
- Avoid giving details about names and places.
- Make code signals you can use if there is a crisis.
- Give security guidelines to those who are going to write to you.
- If you work in a very sensitive area, someone in your home country should scan through your emails and delete sensitive words before the emails are forwarded to you.
- Emails from people working in sensitive areas should never be forwarded without asking the sender.
- Never display emails from sensitive areas in public meeting places.

Email correspondence is only one aspect you need to think through if you want to work in a sensitive area. How to plant churches in hostile environments, what to do with Bibles and other literature and how to inform your supporters back home are some other central areas of work that you will have to plan carefully.

Phill Sandahl – Operations Director of Global Opportunities

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Tentmaker Development Worker's Dilemma

A tentmaker working for an international relief organization writes (us) about her frustration and pain as she struggles to deal with issues of poverty and justice while providing aid to people in the country where she is serving. How do you respond to the abject need? Does giving money to the beggar help meet his need, or just enable him to remain in a dependent state of poverty.

Welcome to the world of development and issues workers have agonized over for decades. Every thoughtful, caring development worker sooner or later in his career faces these issues.

Just having compassion is not enough. History is rife with stories of well-intentioned efforts to "fix" a problem by jumping in with western "can-do" spirit and changing things. The truth is there are no simple, one size fits all, solutions. Workers need to learn the culture and appropriate ways to live out their faith in it.

Thoughtful people in recipient countries are beginning to recognize that simply giving away stuff does not bring about lasting change. Two years ago a conference of African leaders begged Bono (See the "Africans to Bono") and well meaning groups like his to stop giving Africa money and material aid. They requested instead assistance in developing skills and systems to help take care of themselves.

A work team from North America came to "help" construct a school for the children in a poor rural community. They had grandiose plans for how quickly, with their expertise, they could build a school for the community. They were very upset when told they could not bring their power tools and finish the building in a week. Nor would they take their picture in front of the new school before leaving. It was a blow to their egos.

Rather, they would work along-side the villagers using the hand-tools available in the community. Concrete would be mixed with a shovel and block cut with a machete, instead of the power tools they were accustomed to using. The school would not be completed while they were there so that the villagers would finish it after they left. The community would know that they had done the project themselves and would be able to do it again when necessary. The work team came to help and share of themselves with the village, not to do for the village.

As they worked along with the parents and took breaks to play with the children new relationships were formed. When these accomplished craftsmen left, their project was not yet finished. But there was a special link with the people of the community and tears of sadness at their departure. They came to build a school and instead built bonds of love into the community.

Fundamental change has to take place internally if we are to see lasting results. People have to take ownership of their problems. There must be a change in worldview or mindset. This kind of change takes time and personal relationship. These deeper transformations will lead to changes in the internal social structures and result in real change.

While not written specifically for development workers, *LifeWork: A Biblical Theology for what You Do Every Day*, discusses God's plan for followers of Christ to live out their faith in everything they do. When Christ's followers live out their faith, the transformation the world needs will follow – at home or abroad.

The Road to God Decision making in the marketplace

A web design class I took recently analyzed people's decision making process. They found that people had different decision making styles.

Using the Myers-Briggs instrument they identified 4 different decision making styles – competitor, humanistic, methodical, and spontaneous. Appropriate material was created in different parts of the page to help each make a decision. My point here is not to discuss web design, but to recognize the principle that there are different decision-making styles which need different approaches to bring people to a decision.

Different people are "wired" differently. That's the way God made us. He uses different communication styles to draw individuals to himself. Consider these examples:

- Ethiopian Eunuch – While searching Isaiah he was approached by Philip who explained, "that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus"
- Thomas the doubter – show me
- Andrew through family relationship – I have found the Messiah, you must come and meet him too
- Paul the Apostle through a power encounter – Lord, what would you have me to do?

Jim Engel a number of years ago gave us the Engel Scale which recognized that coming to Christ, and growing in Him, was a process and not just a single event. To this we need to add an understanding that depending on a person's decision-making style the necessary steps along that path may vary. How they come to their relationship with Christ is not as important as that they do.

Sociologists and religious leaders over the years have studied the conversion process and found many different ways people have come to make a religious conversion. Often there is a combination of messages/experiences. Among the most frequently mentioned: preaching and persuasion, reading and study, deeds by other believers, healing and miracles, cultural practices, visions and power encounters. Different cultures will be more receptive to some than to others. But God is not limited by one culture's preference.

So what does this have to do with tentmaking? We need to recognize that in the marketplace we will come across people with all kinds of decision-making styles. God wants to connect with all of them. To do so he has a toolkit with a variety of communication methods. We need to have our eyes open to what God is doing and not assume that our favorite tool (method) is best for all people and situations.

The Tentmaker's role:

- Be faithful in your witness
- Give the Holy Spirit room to work
- Rejoice in those he brings to God

Those are my thoughts. What are yours? I would welcome dialog on this thought. Write me at [phill\(at\)globalopps.org](mailto:phill(at)globalopps.org)

Creating a Kingdom Values Based Corporate Culture: Putting the "M" in Business as Mission

The BP oil platform failure and subsequent leak in the Gulf of Mexico is a major news focus these days. People are asking, "What could have led to such a catastrophic failure?" In the days to come this will be analyzed ad nauseam. Many factors are being discussed. One that keeps coming up is that there was a corporate culture of indifference.

Business gurus are nearly unanimous. Clear core values are essential for success. They need to be understood and internalized by everyone in the company. They do not guarantee success, but their absence guarantees mediocrity or failure. I want to look at the idea of corporate culture in light of the growing interest of Business as Mission (BAM) as a type of tentmaking work.

In Christian circles a lot of interest has been generated about BAM and the importance of having businesses run by Christians in order to bring a witness to the international marketplace. It sounds great. But what does it actually mean?

What makes a business Christian?

Is it enough that the business is run by a Christian? Can there be a corporate culture based on Kingdom values? If so, what does it look like? Should the employer use work time for "devotional meetings".

Can he obligate employees to participate?

Maybe the path one takes is to have a chaplain on staff and make that person available to staff or even to customers. Does this make the company a business as mission company.

What if the business measures its success by looking at the “Triple Bottom Line” taking into account more than just profit, but also social and spiritual impact?

These activities may be desirable, but in some ways they miss the main point. They are not what make a company a BAM company.

Companies, like people, have a “personality” or “style” in the way they act and in the way they relate to their staff and constituencies. Our core values determine how we interpret and interact with our environment. In organizations we refer to this as its corporate culture.

Every company has a culture, whether consciously developed or not. Sometimes the corporate culture is given slightly different names: culture of the organization (Eldred), core values (Johnson), core ideals (Collins), for example.

Corporate culture, like our social culture, is instilled in us by everything around us, people and environment, and we are not always consciously aware of it and how it influences everything we do. It shapes our worldview and informs all of our decisions.

When the company culture is well aligned, fewer rules are needed because the staff is motivated internally to do the right thing. The company values are internalized and guide all actions assisting staff in the interpretation of the messages they receive and in determining what the appropriate response should be.

Having a Christian corporate culture means incorporating Kingdom values not only into our goals, but also into the staff’s way of thinking and operating – into the core of the company’s “being.” The values need to be a part of who the company is and how it behaves. In other words Kingdom values need to be part of the personality of the company.

No one activity makes a company a BAM company. It starts with an understanding of the the values of the Kingdom of God and exemplifies it in the sum of its attitudes and activities. Essentially the company runs as one company simultaneously under the sovereignty of the the Kingdom as God with its requirements and the laws or legal requirements that govern its host country.

What are those values? Ken Eldred has a useful list to prime our thinking in the third chapter of his book, *God Is at Work*.

He gives 10 common features that characterize BAM companies.

1. The presence of a Christian or Christians with a sphere of influence.
2. A product or service in harmony with God’s creational purpose.
3. A mission or business purpose that is larger and deeper than mere financial (though including it) so that the business contributes in some way to the Kingdom of God.
4. The product or service is offered with such excellence that it suggests the presence of the Kingdom and invites opportunity to witness.
5. Customers are treated with dignity and respect and not just as a means of profit.
6. Employees and workers are equipped to achieve greater potential in their life and, if they are Christians, to work wholeheartedly with faith, hope and love.
7. All aspects of the business are considered to be potentially a ministry and subject to prayer.
8. The culture (values, symbols, governing beliefs) of the organization line up with God’s word and Kingdom purposes.

9. The business runs on grace.

10. The leaders are servants, dedicated to serve the mission of the business, the best interest of the employees, the customers and the shareholders because they are first of all servants of God. (Eldred pp.62-65)

In summary, BAM companies seek to live by Kingdom values and consider all aspects of the business activity itself to be missions work.

How does one actually develop a Kingdom values based corporate culture? That is a topic for another day. For starters check out the Eldred and Bakke books below.

Books for Further Reading:

God Is at Work - Ken Eldred

Joy at Work - Dennis Bakke

Great Commission Companies - Steve Rundle and Tom Steffen

Good to Great - Jim Collins

Business as Mission - Neal Johnson

Note: Steve Rundle & Neal Johnson are former GO board members

“My sacred space is a café,”

begins Chris’ blog entry where he talks about his marketplace ministry. He goes on to explain, “... it’s sacred space for me precisely because the people around me there aren’t all Christians. In fact, most are un-churched or de-churched. And I love them.” Chris works part time at the café and realizes God has put him in his position for a purpose. There are daily opportunities to touch the lives of those who need to know his Savior.

He continues, “The cafe becomes sacred space for me every time I have a deep conversation with a coworker or listen to a regular customer share their life-story. The relationships I’ve been able to develop with co-workers and customers are sacred relationships. Some people talk to their barista they (sic) way one does to the proverbial bartender, and at times I feel like taking off my shoes because I know I’m on holy ground when someone opens up to me.”

This story is instructive for several reasons. Chris was intentional in his choice to be bi-vocational. He recognizes that the café environment gives him an entryway into the community. He has continual opportunity to meet people who would not normally set foot inside a church. He meets them on their terms in a setting where they are comfortable. He can demonstrate the love of Christ in very natural ways non-believers can understand and relate to.

The Church has not done a good job of teaching its members that we are all called to be ambassadors for the Kingdom of God and that we are all called to go out to all the world (including the marketplace) and make disciples. [1 Pet 2.9 - But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.]

Chris says he also does it because it gives him a way to demonstrate and model for the other members of his congregation how they, as disciples of Christ, can find meaning in their “ordinary” jobs. “Our churches are filled with people who are discontent with their work and who rarely think of their jobs as places where they can participate in the Kingdom of God.”

This story brings life and relevance to 1 Cor 10.31 “...whatever you do...do all for the Glory of God”.

Chris’ other vocation is as a pastor, but he sometimes says, “the place where I do the most real ministry is the cafe.” He is considered “bi-vocational” because he works half-time in a church and part-time at the café. Yet he does not see any difference between the two “jobs” when it comes to proclaiming the Gospel.

Chris concludes his article, “there’s no separation between the two – each job complements and enriches the other.”

As I reflect on Chris’ experience, I can’t help but ask, “Would Chris be any less a minister of the gospel if he only worked at the café?” This is tentmaking – sharing the Gospel in the workplace where God puts you.

I encourage the reader to go to Chris’ blog and read the account in his own words.

God’s Whole Life Policy

What Is Secular Work?

In the previous article Chris worked in an everyday vocation not connected to the church. Often this is referred to in today’s parlance as a “secular” job because it was not connected to church and did not require any professional religious preparation or qualification.

In spite of that, Chris called the coffee shop where he worked his sacred place. How can that be?

Secular-Sacred Divide

In the West we have the practice of classifying all of our activities into two camps – the sacred and the secular. The sacred we reserve for things spiritual and religious, and the rest we relegate to secular or worldly. This false dualism leads to the erroneous idea that things that are “secular” are of little concern to God and of lesser importance. Christianity is narrowed down to a focus on personal salvation and little else.

The broader consequences of this are that the church is separated from its surrounding culture. Sunday worship services and participation in church program activities are elevated to a higher importance. Those who work in these activities are elevated as well in the mind of church-attendees. As a result, little effort is spent by the church teaching its members how to integrate their faith into the activities outside the church. Rather, the focus is on bringing people into the church to be saved. When the church limits her vision with this mindset, she becomes unable to impact the culture as God desires. Scott Allen succinctly argues this issue in *Beyond the Sacred-Secular Divide*.

God's Calling

God has called his church to take the Kingdom of Heaven (and its values) to the entire culture, teaching them all he has commanded and making disciples. When the church has an undivided view of reality and realizes God's intention to have Lordship over all of his creation, the physical as well as the spiritual realm, she is freed to complete his redemptive plan.

There are some who only see "secular" work as a means to an end. Either a necessary means to gather financial resources to carry out the work of the church, or for the more visionary, as a means to reach out and evangelize the lost. Both of these objectives are desirable, but fall short of God's complete plan.

God wants to redeem all of creation. His church needs to engage the culture and restore the values that were lost in the fall. Most of this takes place in the workplace where the majority of the lost are, AND where most of the church people spend the greatest amount of their time as well.

Reflections on Whole Life Integration

Willy Kotiuga has posted a provocative draft "People At Work: Preparing To Be The Whole Church" to be presented at Lausanne 2010 in South Africa later this year. (The whole article is worth studying, and you can add your comments.)

He draws on models of workers in the Bible to challenge the church to create a sacred work environment wherever God has placed them. Joseph worked every day in Egypt bringing his God-given values including accountability, responsibility, excellence, teamwork, risk-taking, forgiveness and support to the workplace. While these are desirable from a professional standpoint, they also demonstrate an application of the character of God and the qualities of a Kingdom worker. Each of these character qualities, among others, provide opportunities for discipling those in the marketplace in godly living, but also provide opportunities to lead them into a relationship with the Lord. Kotiuga concludes, "There is no sacred-secular divide in promoting these values." When God's children work "as unto the Lord" the workplace is sanctified.

Your Work Is Worship

When work is done from this perspective one realizes with Bradley Moore "Your Work Is Worship." Quoting author and activist Dave Gibbons in the book *Our Souls at Work*

"The word glory conveys the idea of beauty. So as we do good work that reflects God's character...we unleash his beauty. People see God. Our work is a way to worship God. It has intrinsic value and can demonstrate God's character when we do good work. Faith and work are to be seamless. Work is an expression of our life in Christ. Separating the two is like separating "being" from "doing." How do you know who you are being without considering what you are doing?"

Responding to the Gibbons quote Bradley says,

"These few sentences sealed the deal for me as far as pulling together the oft-segregated work and spiritual realms into one happy path towards the Kingdom of God.

We cannot separate who we are from what we are doing. How could anyone lead a double-life like that?"

Conclusion

This article opened with a question, "Why did Chris call his work in the café sacred?" Those who live their whole life for the Lord do not have a secular-sacred divide and present their whole life as a "living sacrifice" to God. With God there are no compartments. God's policy is to live your whole life for him, and all of life is equally important to him and is critical in his plan of redemption.

Getting Your Life in Order

A term often used in discussions of tentmakers troubles me. It is frequently used by those who are pastoring a church but also holding another job to make ends meet financially. That term is "bi-vocational"

The term may, or may not, be used correctly but that is not what bothers me. What disturbs me is that it reinforces the unbiblical concept of a secular-sacred divide. It gives a mistaken understanding of the biblical teaching on work and leads to a number of other problems.

Conversations about being bi-vocational often center around how hard the person has to work doing two jobs. Then there are problems of maintaining balance – whether in the use of time, the management of finances, or some other aspect of life.

This approach is not helpful. What is called for is some perspective. When there is a problem resolving a conflict of interests it is best to look for an overarching principle that addresses all of them.

Consider this:

- For the Apostle Paul tentmaking was not a Plan B when funds ran low, but rather, his preferred, intentional strategy (see Why Did Paul Make Tents). It is a legitimate model and in the early church the predominant one.
- Vocation – the term is related to the word for calling. When one says that he is bi-vocational he is saying that he has two distinct callings, and that they are in conflict. God may ask a person to do a number of different things in his life, but there is one calling.
- When there appears to be a conflict, either one or more options are wrong, or we are not looking at the problem correctly. In most cases there is, in fact, a greater overarching call which can properly align the subsidiary activities.
- All Christians are citizens of the Kingdom of God, and called to build his Kingdom.
- The church is God's vehicle to transform all of society - Not the building. Not even the institution. But the people. (see companion article Travel Light).

- Life is frequently divided into different domains or sectors: family, leisure, professional, financial, etc. Each person participates in each of these domains and connects with other people within them. However, there is no separate domain for faith. Effective faith should permeate all the domains speaking across all of them.
- Each of us has received a unique personality, skills, gifting, and training to prepare us to do the will of the Father. Life, like the body, consists of many parts, all necessary and working together.

When we focus on the Kingdom of God we see that God calls each of us to contribute in different ways to building His Kingdom and taking back territory from the Enemy. To that end He uniquely equips us to transform all sectors of society, by living out our faith where He places us.

We need to change the image of life. It is not the juggling of multiple disparate activities. Rather it follows the dynamic model of an atom. It is a single entity consisting of multiple moving components interacting together to achieve one purpose – building the Kingdom.

Travel Light Leave Your Baggage Behind

"IT'S a LIE. The sign in front of our new church building is a lie," the pastor declared to his congregation. "It reads First Baptist Church. It should say, The Place Where the First Baptist Church Meets." He had a good point. One's understanding of what the church is influences how he participates in his church and community.

When working in another culture it is even more important to understand the difference between the essence of the church and cultural expressions of the church. We may not recognize how God is moving because we are looking for something familiar and comfortable. Worse, we may be tempted to make the church in another culture conform to our liking. In the process we make it alien to the people of that culture.

Keep It Simple

Brian Hogan, an unreached peoples church planter, identifies two major obstacles to successful church planting. COMPLEXITY – what we are doing is too complex. Church planters need to strip away the cultural elements to the bare New Testament essentials. HOLY SPIRIT – because of a deep distrust of the Holy Spirit to do his work in the life of believers, foreigner churchmen set up barriers blocking new believers from leadership. When complexity is removed, and we trust the Holy Spirit, God will shape the church to best serve in that culture.

In the Global Opportunities GO Equipped Tentmaking course we dedicate several sessions to the essence of the church. For instance, George Patterson identifies seven key elements that define every church. Other elements may be good, but they are not required. Even the essentials may be expressed differently from culture to culture.

If you had to identify the essence of the church, what practices would be on your list?

In Conclusion

While pondering this subject I recalled two teachings from my childhood. I guess I had the answer all along.

What I Learned in Sunday School

"Here's the church, here's the steeple;
Open the door and see all the people;
You can have a church without a steeple,
But you can't have a church without the people."

Jesus said, "For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them."

Just a Glass of Water

Neetu was wandering through the break room looking troubled.

The boss approached and asked what was wrong.

"Nothing. I am thirsty and looking for a glass for some water, but they are all dirty" she replied. She left empty-handed. In India, a professional worker would rather go thirsty than lower herself to do the work of a lower level cleaning person.

After she left the boss washed the dishes in the break room and then got himself a glass of water. He got a second glass for Neetu and took it to her desk.

"What is this?"

"Weren't you looking for a glass of water?," he said.

"You shouldn't do this," she replied.

"Why not, it's just a glass of water, and I knew you were thirsty.

The incident seemed to end there..

Days later, in a staff meeting she began weeping unexplainably. Concerned co-workers asked what the problem was. "I get it!" she exclaimed. I understand the statue at the entrance to the office. The one of Jesus washing the disciple's feet. Neetu had known the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, but she did not understand the power of the message until she experienced the reality of it herself in a tangible way.

In this Kingdom Company the Christian management determined to exemplify biblical principles in the way they ran the company. Core values were based on Bible truths – honesty, servanthood, stewardship, and community. To build the concepts into the company culture they regularly use Bible stories to illustrate the application of these values in the workplace. Artwork in the offices reinforced the teaching. A statuette similar to the one pictured above sat on the director's desk.

As events like this are observed and repeated a different business culture is being forged, and God breaks through to those who are touched.

For Reflection

Mark 9.41 I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.

Col 3.17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Ministry On and Off the Clock

It's 10:30 pm when the phone rings. The voice on the other end sounds frightened.

It's Lindsay, the new neighbor, who moved in recently. We stopped by to introduce ourselves two months ago as the family was moving in and exchanged phone numbers. We have not had contact since. What's going on? Lindsay explains she is home alone with her two pre-school children and she is scared. Her husband has not returned from work yet.

There are noises outside the house. It sounds like someone is trying to break in. "Could someone drive by the house and see if there is anyone outside?"

My wife and I come right over. We don't see anyone outside the house. We call to tell her we are coming to the door so she will not panic. My wife goes in to reassure her while I walk around the house.

The intruder has gone. He left a tell-tale mess of spilled garbage. I'm not sure if it was a raccoon or a panther but there was no danger. Lindsay sighed in relief.

Fast forward to Sunday. I am reading the church bulletin. Inside I find a list of ministry needs and opportunities - Teach Sunday School, Lead Bible study, Help with VBS, Short term mission trip to Guatemala, etc.

I reflect. These are wonderful ministries. BUT wait! Something doesn't seem right. Is this all there is to ministry? I get the impression that in order to be ministry, my effort has to be on the church calendar and part of a church program. What about helping a neighbor? Or, helping a student with his studies? Or, making sure my work is done in a God-honoring way? Where does that fit in?

If we only see ministry as something that we can schedule, or program, then we have a very incomplete picture.

The notion that things that happen in the church, or are part of a church program, are ministry and that the rest are not, is false. In part this is a result of the old Greek idea that some activities are sacred and others are secular. This needs to be challenged and corrected.

I believe there is another reason for this misconception. We only need to look at the stories we tell and the heroes we praise in church for the answer. Christians will practice the activities that are recognized and appreciated in the church.

When was the last time someone was recognized for helping a neighbor, or conducting his business in a God-honoring way, unless it was part of a formal church program? Instead we have the VBS leaders and the Sunday School teachers recognized from the platform. We have a mission team do a presentation when they return from their trip. These are exciting to report and they should be reported. But if we only tell these kinds of stories we fail to show people that ministry can happen in the everyday pathways of life too.

The Church needs to tell the stories about how God uses everyday activities that come along as teaching moments to share faith in natural everyday settings. In that way she will be showing Christians how to take Christ into every corner of their lives – their homes, their communities and their workplace.

Ministry is a lifestyle choice, not a scheduling choice. It is about the relationships we create. It's about bringing God's blessing to those he puts in our way.

Matt 5.16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Ari Rocklin – International Director of Global Opportunities

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Why training for ministry skills is so important.

Business as mission (BAM) is a fast growing component of missions to unreached areas of the world, and so it should be. It is a wonderful way to enable people to help themselves instead of being supported by well intended organizations or individuals. On the other hand are people who start Kingdom businesses that have a for profit purpose. I am excited at this trend and am seeing great changes in many countries where I am in contact with tentmakers.

Here is the problem as I see it.

When I look at BAM events around the world, and look at the schedules and outlines of topics that will be addressed, I seldom see a ministry component or how to do ministry in tandem with the business.

I once wrote the BAM seminar coordinators of an upcoming event and asked why there was no ministry training included in their wonderful program? They told me that it simply had not crossed their minds, as they were busy lining up people with much to offer in developing a business plan, dealing with bureaucracy, raising funds etc. In their defense, they immediately asked me if I could teach such a session.

Many Christian professionals take jobs overseas or are assigned to a foreign posting by their company, often to so called closed countries. Unfortunately many leave without any specific ministry training and thus miss out on intentional sharing of their faith in meaningful ways.

"Christian professionals with overseas jobs are not tentmakers unless they intentionally seek to make Jesus known to the local people of the host country" Ruth Siemens

GO trains tentmakers, business as mission people for critical ministry skills in difficult countries, many of which are hostile to Christianity, not only to thrive in new cultures but to have effective ministry within the constraints of local laws and regulations. This may sound overwhelmingly difficult, but it does not have to be.

As a high level security official of a closed country once told me in a brash way, "Not even in Slamistan (his country) is it against the law to answer questions." This simple statement tells us that renting a building for church services and then inviting people to come to a meeting is not permitted, but having relational conversations, replying to people's questions, is not only accepted, but legal.

When you seek out training for tentmaking, business as mission, make sure you will also learn about doing ministry. Integrate your ministry plan with your business plan, and let God do the rest.

Midnight summons - an ongoing story

It was a night not much unlike any other, we had already fallen asleep when the loud knock on the door woke us to the stark reality, that this is it, they told me this would happen.

I told my wife not to worry as I walked toward the door, my heart pounding in my chest. This cannot be good. "Jesus help me now," was my desperate plea. I tried to greet the gentlemen with courage in my voice only to be told gruffly to go with them. They took me to a car parked nearby behind a building. Once inside I was told not to look out as the driver started the car.

We drove aimlessly up one street and down another, until I was totally confused as to direction.

Eventually we pulled into an industrial area with warehouses. Doors opened and I was quickly pushed inside. It was not what I was expecting. There were over one hundred men in a club type atmosphere complete with live bands and drinking. This is a country where alcohol is strictly forbidden. My driver and his companions apologized for their behavior, but they had to make sure no "local sheriff" was following or watching them.

I was welcomed as the only foreigner and introduced to the gathering as a guest. "Do you know how to play any instruments?" they asked. Wide awake by now, I replied, "I play a bit..."

"Please show us," they told me. I looked at the various instruments on the crude pallet pile called a stage, and picked up an electric guitar. It was very quiet. I looked over the audience, still feeling as if this was all a dream, turned up the volume and let go with my best guitar riffs possible. Apparently it was appreciated, as they all roared in approval.

It has been many nights since my first visit to this underground club, where no sheriffs or their assistants are allowed. We have played music together and debated religion during breaks. Some of the young men's parents are government officials who have lived in the free world, and thus are very capable of debate around religion.

I rejoice at this wonderful opportunity to share my faith in meaningful ways, free from fear of arrest. When these impromptu jamming sessions come to an end just before sunrise, everyone goes home to sleep except me. I have to take a shower and go to my day job.

Pray for my crew - I am their Christian friend.

"Jaxon the bluesman"

Tentmaker training comes to Germany!

Back in the fall of 1998, during a flight from Helsinki Finland to Göteborg Sweden, to attend the Onådda Folk Conference I felt God challenging me to develop tentmaking mobilization and training in Europe. This seemed like impossible and I felt overwhelmed at the scope such a task. With some hesitation, I agreed to do my part.

Since then, I have worked tirelessly toward this goal, often with setbacks and disappointments. So many trans-Atlantic flights in the hopes of finding people...having initial consultations with various mission agencies and groups...though exciting and promising at first, simply fizzled to nothing. Every now and then, the vision seemed to take off and incremental successes were attained, but always, the going was slow and often seemed hopeless.

Looking at the map of Europe while praying became a habit. Asking God for direction and connections. Always, when looking at the map, my eyes fell on Germany simply due to its central geographical location in Europe.

Then out of nowhere, an email came from someone from Germany who contacted us through the website, interested in learning more about tentmaking. After some dialogue this led to an invitation to consider running our tentmaking business as mission course in Germany.

After almost two years of emails and consultations, it was finally time to fly to meet the people at AWM Korntal Germany. One big step toward the goal of tentmaker training in central Europe had been reached. Not only that, but we met with like minded, like visioned people excited at having this course at their excellent facility.

Word from the President of AWM

Dear colleagues working in an intercultural setting!

Has it ever happened to you after meeting a person whom you did not know formerly – that you soon discover that you share a common vision with that person?!

That was my experience a couple weeks ago when I met with representatives from Global Opportunities and Tent. God was at work. It didn't take us long to see that we both desired to support God's people looking to serve the nations.

As a result of this meeting, the Academy of World Mission, Germany is proud to host and co-sponsor a seminar on tentmaking/BAM. We are looking forward to welcome you at our academy in Germany.

Serving with you - Traugott Hopp - President

The story of TENT Norway

TENT of Norway was founded in 2001 by a team of dedicated people, a strong board and effective former tentmaker, Steinar Opheim. Instead of figuring it out alone, they invited Global Opportunities to help them with resources and teachers for their courses.

An early indication of God's favor was made evident when TENT was able to purchase a historical prayer house building right in downtown Bergen for one dollar. These historical prayer houses were built using volunteer labor by everyday workers who needed a place to worship. Thus the location in the port area where most work activity took place in the early days of this prayer house movement.

Although the cost of the building was one dollar, the renovations that were needed were more than even the highest estimates. This being a historical building meant that the exterior could not be changed and had to remain original. The interior was completely redesigned with the addition of offices in the loft area and converting the open basement into a rental unit and kitchen. The general meeting room is large and bright, with excellent air circulation and comfortable seating. Wireless internet is available to all as well.

TENT is able to rent this facility when not being used for tentmaking events, which helps in making payments on the renovation costs. After the renovations loan is paid off, this income will go a long way toward adding much needed staff to this growing organization.

TENT is also looking for donations toward the renovation loan, if you are able to help or know someone with Norwegian genes who might want to support this work in a meaningful way, please contact Steinar Opheim directly by sending him an email at: [steinar\(at\)tent.no](mailto:steinar@tent.no)

Twenty dollars that changed a life in India.

Jim a tentmaker to India was used to seeing a man sitting by his weigh scale all day long, hoping someone would come and use his services. For the equivalent of 10 cents, anyone could weigh themselves in a country where the majority cannot afford to buy a scale of their own.

One day Jim decided to sit down beside the man to simply get to know him and have an opportunity to practice Hindi. He learned that Ashok was actually renting the scale and was paying up to 90% of his days take to the owner of the scale.

While Jim sat there, suddenly there seemed to be more people wanting to weigh themselves than usual. Ashok suggested that Jim's presence was bringing him good fortune. Of course the real reason was that people were curious as to why a foreigner would sit down with Ashok.

While Jim walked toward his own job he started to think more about Ashok's business. How could he help Ashok earn a bigger slice of the pie?

This thought did not leave him for weeks on end. Each morning and afternoon, Jim would make a point of sitting down beside Ashok, which always brought him more business. They became fast friends.

In a short time Jim had learned the complexity of Ashok's business. The scale was owned by a man who had many scales in the city. He paid his workers a measly amount of the earnings. If the scale broke, the worker would be in debt for months and perhaps years until repayment with high interest was made.

Jim desperately wanted to make a difference, so he went and bought Ashok a scale for \$20. Fortunately he had done his homework before hand. If he had just given the scale as a gift, the renter of scales would simply have taken it away from Ashok, who would have no recourse nor police protection.

Before presenting the scale to Ashok, he went to the local police station and asked an officer to come with him to verify the business transaction between himself and Ashok. The policeman watched as Jim gave the scale to Ashok. A business plan was developed by Jim that allowed Ashok to repay the loan in about six months. Then the loan paper was signed (fingerprinted) by Ashok. Having the policeman present afforded some protection for Ashok, and having a foreigner involved added a bit more.

Before the six months was up, Ashok had saved enough of his earnings of 100% to pay back the full amount of the loan. Jim once again called on the policeman to witness the full repayment of the loan, had him sign the "paid in full" receipt together with Ashok and Jim. Then Jim made a few copies of the receipt and even had one copy laminated which Ashok could keep as proof of ownership.

Today Ashok keeps 100% of his daily earnings and is proudly able to show everyone that he has paid back the loan in full. Imagine going from keeping 10% of your daily earnings to 100%. Jim continues to disciple Ashok and members of his family...

Principle: Do not be too quick to help, seek wise counsel from locals so that your gift of a loan does not cause difficulty or dependency. Real help requires getting to know people and involves discipling.

Who is Tiowa Diarra?

I first met Tiowa at the tentmaking-business as mission course in Bergen Norway earlier this year. We had worked together via email for some time, but now we finally got to spend time together.

Let me introduce Tiowa to you in this edition of TMB. I asked him to respond to these four questions.

1. Who is Tiowa Diarra?

I am married to Madeleine and have five growing kids.

I graduated from Mali University with a Master in Education, from Yamoussoukro Bible Institute with a diploma, and from West Africa Alliance Theological Seminary in Côte d'Ivoire

with an M DIV. Then started pastoral ministry in 1986. Since that date I have been engaged in various leadership positions in Mali such as National youth leader and General secretary of Evangelicals in Mali.

Together with other lay people, we founded Partners in Mission organization with the aim of bringing the Gospel to remote areas in Mali and to train nationals for tentmaking.

2. How did you end up being All Africa Tentmakers International (TI) rep?

After the TI Bulgaria meeting, Partners in Mission reviewed all the materials and took a significant step by engaging in Tentmaker training and Church leader mobilization for tentmaking mission. In April 2005 we held a mini conference in Bamako, then planned the first All Africa TI Conference for August 2007. The same year we held the very first tentmaker training in collaboration with TENT of Norway. The next year, in Cape Town, I was appointed as "pioneer for African regions"

3. How do you see the future of the tentmaking-business as mission (TEMBAM) movement in and from Africa?

There are specific results we can see after five years of TI operation: more than 1750 tentmakers missionaries have been trained and deployed all over Africa; most of them are working on personal evangelism and church planting. When the capacity of Churches will be enhanced in the future, it is obvious more results will be reached. There is a good perspective of African Tentmakers operating within and outside the continent. The African diaspora in Northern Africa, in the Middle East, in Europe and Asia includes potential tentmakers that need to be trained and deployed intentionally for mission.

4. How can people learn more about TEMBAM Africa and how can they pray?

Africa TEMBAM is engaged in training and training materials development, church mobilization, strategic reflection on optimizing the potential of the African diaspora.

Africa TI is publishing a Monthly Prayer Diary that engage people in prayer for tentmaking activities. We are also publishing reports, available on request where people can receive information about the progress of TEMBAM in the continent. The desk of the TI Executive Secretary also publishes a monthly bulletin called OpportuniTies on tentmaking news around the world including news from Africa.

Thank you, Tiowa. It is a blessing to work with you and to know you as a friend.

Ed: Tiowa is helping GLOBAL Opportunities in a very meaningful way by responding to requests that come to us from Africa.

The Challenges Tentmakers Face

One of the privileges of working with tentmakers, business as mission people, is hearing back from them during their vacations and after their returns to their homelands. We've setup a systematic way of gathering their experiences and challenges, and are listing them here. Number 9 is the least of the challenges, but worthy of noting, and of course number 1 being the most critical challenge.

The GO/TENT team looks at this information very seriously and then adapts the real life issues into their training and mentoring. Thus each course they run has new and updated information from active tentmakers which in turn allows them to offer up to date training for those being trained. Indeed, the GO/TENT team feels this is one of the greatest strengths of their intensive program in equipping people for ministry skills in hard places.

As you read down this list, do know that it is the accumulated experience of literally hundreds of active tentmakers. We hope this gives you good insights and helps you to prepare well.

9. Finding & keeping housing
8. Getting & renewing visas
7. Difficulties with bosses & coworkers
6. Working too many hours
5. Cultural frustrations
4. Maintaining focus on ministry
3. Team conflicts/fellow tentmakers
2. Materialism
1. Expatriate trap

The Joys Tentmakers Experience

This is the second list, and we trust that it is self explanatory. I don't know about you, but this list is urging me to go and make disciples!

8. Job satisfaction
7. No closed countries
6. Natural relationships with nationals
5. Talking about your faith is welcomed
4. Praying for people by name
3. Modeling for national believers
2. Most tentmakers receive good salaries
1. Tithing can help train new tentmakers

First ever mass evacuation of tentmakers!

This has been a tough month for tentmakers in the troubled region of the world. As I watched this quickly developing turmoil, from one country to the next, I received a word from the Lord which has been of comfort to those who have had to leave, sometimes with only their clothes on their backs, to an unknown future.

"I am the Lord God, I have not been caught by surprise by these events. Tell those who have to leave in haste that their service to my Kingdom has run its course this time around. They could not have done anymore. Their service and obedience has been noted and I am pleased."

How does anyone prepare to evacuate from countries where an already weak system breaks down completely? The terror of gunfire, air attacks, bombs blowing up at all hours of the day, seeing bodies on the streets from your windows, spending time with locals who do not have the luxury of being evacuated and must stay behind.

At our tentmaking business as mission courses, we try to prepare people well for all known challenges. However this one has not been a part of our program, but will be in the future. We have learned a lot from the experiences of tentmakers who have faced forced evacuation in the past weeks, and those now being trained will benefit from their tragic experiences.

God is in control!

We are hearing reports of a new openness to the Gospel in this region already. One house church that seemed incapable of taking leadership without the tentmakers, were forced into doing it simply since they knew they would be alone in a matter of days. The report told us of a confident, joyful, mature house church telling the tentmakers that we will be fine now, is encouraging to everyone involved.

One tentmaker refused to leave with the initial waves of evacuations, and was seen as a hero by the local people. Even taxi drivers were telling him that this is a new time in their country, and talking about your faith is now OK.

Another tentmaker who also stayed behind until the last possible moments (just before the bombs fell from the coalition forces) was actually invited to sit at the table where the new constitution was being drafted. Imagine the joy of being a part of something like this? Add to this joy, being asked what he thought should be in this constitution. He suggested freedom of religion, and was told that it was already in the document. Then he suggested freedom to change ones religion.

This too was added, after a rather lengthy explanation of what he meant by that statement. You can understand why this would be a new line of thinking in this region. Again, in the middle of turmoil, God is doing a new thing.

It is impossible to share all the good news that are coming out of this tumultuous time, but trust that God is doing something amazing even as we watch the news in horror.

Pray for the local believers, yes there are many.

Pray for the local friends of our tentmakers who have had a chance to hear, but have not yet made decisions.

Pray that the tentmakers will find encouragement, that their needs will be taken care of, and that they will be able to return to a better situation than the one they were forced to leave.

The four questions tentmakers are asked

The four most common questions that expatriate workers are asked by neighbors, coworkers, shopkeepers, taxi drivers and those they come in contact with are:

1. What is your name?
2. What do you do here?
3. Where are you from?
4. Do you believe in God?

Everyone can answer the first three questions in a few short minutes, perhaps even without thinking about it too much. The fourth question requires thought, preparation, sensitivity, gentleness, respect, divine inspiration and a time out.

Check out Peter's advice on this - 1 Peter 3:15,16.

Paul the tentmaker from Tarsus

In one short, to the point sentence, we learn much about Paul. Having established his persona and reason for being, we can assume that he then began passionately sharing his faith in ever creative ways.

How you answer the fourth question will either open the door for future faith discussion or perhaps close the door to potential friendships that lead to faith talks. It is vital that we get it right, we only have one chance to make that critical first introduction of our faith. If it were up to me, I would make every future tentmaker spend at least 100 hours preparing themselves for this one question. It is that important. Getting that answer wrong could raise suspicion and make you an object of unwanted attention or it could simply set the foundation for future dialogue and perhaps even give you status as a man/woman of God.

For those of you considering tentmaking business as mission, or those of you out there already doing it, I urge you to do some homework so you will have the best possible answer to question number four.

Value added tentmaking

We are Christians, of course our faith is important to us and we love to share it with others, but what else do we bring to the nations? I call it value added tentmaking.

Most if not all English speaking expatriates are at one time or another asked to help locals with their English. Whether they do this formally or informally, it brings a tangible value to the community. This is why we urge everyone to take even a short certificate course in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). We recommend a minimal 60 hour course, that can be taken over four weekends to fit in with your work week, before leaving for your overseas contract. It is our recommendation that you do not teach English for free, but charge a reasonable fee to maintain a level of professionalism.

What kind of skills, experience, hobbies do you have that can be used to help locals to improve their situations? ESL is just the most obvious and commonly used bridge to make friendships with your co-workers, neighbors and business people. Make yourself available even if it seems like a lot of extra work.

Here are some ways you might explore in becoming a "value added foreigner" to the local people:

ESL
Computer training
Cooking classes
Small business loans
New ways to grow vegetables
Recycling
Solar cooking
Solar power

Lessons learned from the evacuations

Thanks to the prayers of many, all expatriates made it out from under the bombing and ongoing civil war. Many are reporting miraculous stories of how they were saved from very dangerous situations. Prayers are requested for the many national believers who face an uncertain future. Some early reports are coming in of increased persecution during this lawless era while at the same time there is also a new openness to the Gospel not seen before. God is in control.



What we learned from those who had to evacuate

- Figure out exit routes in advance by taking holiday trips to the various border points
- Make copies of your passport
- When trouble is brewing - *get your exit visa early*
- Leave when your employer tells you
- Internet /mobile phones will probably not work
- Keep enough money on hand for a long taxi ride
- Have an emergency bag ready
- Keep your gas tank full

Everyone got home safely!

We are now including this and much more in our training programs. Thank you to the many expatriates who contributed to this article!

For a more complete list, check out these tips written as it was happening.
<http://globalopps.org/tmbriefs/evacuation.htm>

After the Evacuations - The Return!

After the agony and the fear of an unknown future that tentmakers experienced during the evacuations, many are now returning to their jobs and lives. The local situation has changed, sometimes dramatically. Some local friends have died in the uprisings, others are still in hiding and many more are suffering from unemployment and a sharp rise in the price of staples. Reality has set in and many have accepted their fate with typical, in the "will of God" way.

One tentmaker reports that while there is a greater openness to the Gospel, there are also new enemies emboldened by their perceived power of having rebelled against authority and won their version of victory. The lines between friends and potential enemies are blurred. Hospitality of the locals remains as it has for hundreds of years in their culture.

A few underground house churches have stuck their collective heads out of the sand, and in some cases have enough members and clout to actually rent a building and meet in the open. It remains to be seen if this precarious boldness can continue without reprisal. Pray for them!

The needs of society are many and most relief projects have been welcomed and accepted with obvious gratitude. One shipment of scripture was confiscated by officials only to be released a few months later under mysterious circumstances. The eternal Word of God in the hands of the local people, in their heart languages will do what only God's Word can do: Change lives!

There is a tremendous need for foreign workers of all professions and trades. One tentmaker reports that you can literally take a flight to a neighboring country, hop into a cab that will take you the country next door with minimal questioning by the border guards. Once in the country you can probably find a job within days and receive a visa without the usual weeks of waiting.

The uprisings have for the moment led to these surprising realities:

1. People's hearts are more open than ever to the Gospel.
2. The need for foreign workers is picking up steam.
3. The work visa process has been reduced from months to days.
4. In many countries, it is now possible to just go there, find a job & get a work visa.

In conclusion, although the opportunities and openings are many, the region is not stable. The same lack of security that the local population faces will also be the situation for foreigners.

GO prepared, GO with caution but most importantly of all, GO with God!

Letter from North Africa

from weeping to joy in the Maghreb

I'm reading a letter, a real paper letter from an envelope with a stamp from UK. Remember those? It's written on green paper. It's from a tentmaker serving in North Africa.

About half way through, I am barely able to see the writing as tears fill my eyes and run down my cheeks. I ask my wife to read it to figure out who it is from.

A year earlier

A year before this letter finds me in southern Europe speaking at a missions center and spending downtime with short term teamers heading into North Africa. As we eat our evening meal on the roof of the building with a view over the Med, we can faintly see the mountains of North Africa. Indeed our prayer times are often on this rooftop and we always face those mountains.

Someone interrupts to ask if I can go to the port and pick up a worker arriving on a ship from NA. It is dark by the time I arrive at the port, and people are already walking out of the customs office. How am I supposed to know what the person looks like? I look at each passenger closely from the curb, hoping for some sign or hint.

Eventually no more people come out. I get ready to leave, but take one more look and then I see him—a lonely young man, dragging his duffel bag on the ground behind him, eyes cast downward, seemingly unaware of anything around him. There is a tremendous sadness on his face as he walks up to the car and throws his bag into the trunk. Without a word, he gets into the car and we start the drive back to the center. Eventually he simply asks me if I could take him to the travel agency first thing the next day so he can buy a ticket to fly home as soon as possible. I promise to do that right after breakfast.

Before retiring, we end up sitting on the roof in the darkness, sipping tea in silence. He sighs in silence and it seems like a good time to be silent with those who are silent. Eventually he begins pouring out his pain.

We walk to our rooms in the early morning hours, but before Nate steps into his room he asks for assurance that I will take him to the travel agency after breakfast.

At breakfast his stories of defeat continue with gruesome details of people spitting his way as he walks to buy food. If he goes to a coffee shop, people move away from him which is so unusual for this hospitable culture.

Nate suggests we go to the travel agency after lunch instead. We head to the beach where he continues his story.

He has been teaching English in a small city about 200 km from the capital city of this NA nation. Living alone in a primitive dorm room with no heat in winter and no air conditioning in summer. Although his young students and boss appreciated his teaching, the suspicions by the locals was so strong that no friendships were being made. He shares increasingly sadder stories of his life in this remote city. I feel a wave of sadness and despair come over me.

After lunch with the team, Nate suggests we postpone going to the travel agency until the next morning.

Three days come and go. Mostly I listen to Nate's stories. Debriefing is just a fancy word for listening.

On the fourth morning while having breakfast Nate informs me that he is returning that day to North Africa. His love for the people in his community and desire to see them know Jesus is so strong, that against all my best advice not to return so soon, he insists on returning.

Before he heads to the ferry, we all gather on the rooftop with Nate to pray for his community and ask for a spiritual breakthrough and safety. It is one of those memorable prayer meetings.

I watch Nate with a spring in his step and joy on his face, now with his duffel bag on his shoulder, walk briskly back to the ship that will take him back to the people he loves.

One year later

My wife hands me the letter and says, this is from Nate. He was using an alias in the letter that had been hand carried to the UK and mailed from there due to security issues.

The letter is a testament of God's faithfulness in the life of a young man driven by the love of Jesus to go to the unreached. When Nate returned to his work and life, the spiritual atmosphere had changed tremendously. People welcomed him back with open arms and in the course of his first year back, a house church started from the families of his students.

Today, Nate is back in his home country in Europe, mobilizing new tentmakers. The house church he left behind is thriving and is now a part of a network of house churches in this one majority religion country.

Psalm 126:5 Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

The lesson is that it took years of hardship, with no visible signs of success, and then in God's time, the seeds planted during the those unfruitful years finally sprouted and multiplied.

Reflections from the youngest student at a GO Equipped TENTmaking Course

A New Calling Tugging On My Heart.

Near the end of last May, my father and I traveled some twenty-five hours by airplane and bus to reach the city of Bergen in Norway. When we finally arrived at the building where the course was being held, I was exhausted but excited for things to begin.

Amazingly people had come from 20 countries to this course that was full past capacity.

Why was I there? To learn about becoming a tentmaker – someone who works abroad to share about God’s word, using a work visa to enter countries that are otherwise closed to traditional missionaries.

They follow the example of the apostle Paul, the original tentmaker, and support themselves with their jobs rather than relying on donations from home. They also work to plant small house churches that will remain in the country even when they eventually leave.

Over four days of information-packed sessions, taught by some very talented speakers, I learned more and more about God and His will for His children, and the world around me. It was an eye-opening experience for me in many ways. Even though, at 16, I was the youngest person ever to take the course, I still found it perfectly applicable and understandable, not to mention fascinating.

The rest of the students were of a wide variety of ages, cultures, and backgrounds, yet we got to know one another as good friends. We came together from every continent with a desire to learn and God’s voice echoing in our ears, which helped to create a very positive atmosphere throughout.

Of course, ten hours a day in any classroom is a challenge, and the difference in time zones didn’t help me, but I kept in mind that the course is specifically designed to fit into the schedule of the average working person. In any case, the knowledge I gained from it was certainly worth the effort. I walked away from this experience with a new perspective on things, and a new calling tugging on my heart. I now feel that God plans to send me, perhaps as an English teacher, and, come next September, I will begin working towards that goal in college.

I strongly urge anyone reading this, regardless of age or identity, to look further into the GO Equipped course.

I can safely say that it will make a difference in the way you see things – and it may even change your future in the way it did mine.

M.R.

Ed: Feel free to translate this story into your language -but please send us a copy.

Business as Mission: A Threefold Mandate

Guest Editor Mats Tunehag

Business is more than making money, at least it should be. According to the “father of capitalism” Adam Smith, businesses exist to serve the general welfare.

The computer pioneer Dave Packard said: “Many people assume, wrongly, that a company exists simply to make money. While this is an important result of a company’s existence, we have to go deeper and find the real reasons for our being. People get together and exist as a company so that they are able to accomplish something collectively that they could not accomplish separately - they make a contribution to society.”

In the last 12 – 18 months we have been able to witness the effects of a global economic crisis. Mahatma Gandhi’s list of seven deadly social sins seems to be an accurate diagnosis for some of the causes of this crisis. It has been too much...

1. politics without principle
2. wealth without work
3. commerce without morality
4. pleasure without conscience
5. education without character
6. science without humanity
7. worship without sacrifice

The Christian social activist Jim Wallis wrote about the economic crisis: “How will this crisis change us? How will it change the way we think, act, and decide things - how we live, and how we do business? Yes, this is a structural crisis, and one that clearly calls for new social regulation. But it is also a spiritual crisis, and one that calls for new self-regulation. We seem to have lost some things and forgotten some things — such as our values.” We cannot, and must not, go on assuming and practicing business as usual; neither the extreme Wall Street way, nor the centrally planned socially engineered way.

Business is multi-faceted. It is about profit and values, about wealth creation and social concern, about value added products and services and creation care, about markets and caring for people. But Business as Mission, BAM, is more than just Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), it is more than job creation and entrepreneurship. BAM, is about being a follower of Jesus in the market place. BAM businesses also want to see Christ revealed and God glorified among all peoples and nations.

For Business as Mission rests on three distinct Biblical mandates:

1. The creation mandate is to “till, care for, exercise stewardship, multiply, work, prosper”. This is about being creative; create good things for ourselves and others – also in and through business. This also means being good stewards of our talents, resources and callings, but also caring for creation and people. It is also acknowledging and affirming the gifts and calling of entrepreneurs.
2. The great commandment mandate is to “love your neighbor as yourself”. We know that business can and should serve people and meet various needs. For example: Unemployment is a major underlying cause to malnourishment and starvation, homelessness, disease and limited access to medical treatment, as well as to debt and crime. Providing people with jobs is alleviating and preventing these dire conditions.

3. The great commission mandate is to “make disciples of all nations”. As followers of Jesus we have a global mission – to all peoples. BAM has a missional and global intent. BAM takes B and M seriously: real business and intentional mission, especially to areas with dire spiritual, economical and social needs. BAM businesses want to see Christ revealed and God glorified, in and through business, among all peoples and nations.

These three mandates must be at the forefront when we plan and run BAM businesses. It is equally important that these three serve as a context as we continuously evaluate our practical BAM mission. We must be aware of the risk of mission drift. One may start out with high hopes and ambitions regarding all three mandates, but eventually end up just operating a CSR business, only fulfilling the creation mandate and the great commandment mandate. As good as that may be for various stakeholders, it is nevertheless a shortcoming. Our unique contribution and responsibility as BAMers rests on the threefold mandate.

Just doing business for maximization of profit is also a mission drift. That limited understanding and praxis of business contributed towards the global recession. Mahatma Gandhi’s observations are important as we seek the general welfare of society. Finally, as Christians in the market place we strive to do business as unto the Lord, being accountable to Him and to fellow followers of Jesus.

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February 2010

Lausanne Senior Associate - Business as Mission
World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission Associate - Business as Mission

The Wheaton Declaration

In October 2009 we organized a global consultation on Business as Mission, BAM, under the theme ‘Business as Integral Calling’. The Consultation, held in Wheaton, Illinois USA, was a significant contribution to equip many on the journey towards a better understanding and praxis of BAM.

We came from sixteen countries and five global regions “to explore the place of business in God’s purposes, together with the sacred calling of a life in business.

We began with an acknowledgement of God’s sovereignty and Lordship over all aspects of human life, including our work, our business, our money, our profit, our economy, and our working relationships.”

Our conversations were organized around topics like:

- What challenges and opportunities confront business seeking to implement Kingdom values?
- How does an understanding of the Kingdom of God re-center and anchor business?
- From a Kingdom of God perspective, how should business, in conjunction with non-governmental organizations and government agencies, address poverty?
- How do businesses with Kingdom values operate within environmental and natural resource constraints?

The Wheaton Consultation brought together leaders from the realms of business, non-profit organizations, and Christian ministry with theologians and academic leaders in business, economics, and missions.

The Consultation sought to build upon the Lausanne process and document.

Our deliberations are summarized in the Wheaton Declaration. See previous article.

One brief excerpt:

“It is our deep conviction that businesses that function in alignment with the core values of the Kingdom of God are playing and increasingly should play an important role in holistic transformation of individuals, communities and societies.”

Mats Tunehag

Lausanne Senior Associate Business as Mission

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BAM articles, papers and reports are available in English and a dozen other languages under 'Further Reading'.

Effective Disciple-making Made Simple (Luke 10:1-9)

Guest editor

David S. Lim, Ph.D.

We all know that God desires to save all peoples of the world (2 Pet.3:9; 1 Tim.2:3-4). If this is so, we can assume that His mission strategy to win the world and disciple the nations must not be complex, but simple. It must be so simple so that the good news can spread and multiply rapidly through ordinary people, even without need for much training.

This is confirmed in the New Testament (NT) in the mission strategies of Jesus Christ and the early Christians, especially Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles (all non-Jews). Jesus Christ trained 12 disciples and within 40 years they had evangelized as far east as India (Thomas), as far north as Moscow (Andrew), as far south as Ethiopia (Matthew), as Paul and his apostolic team (including Priscilla and Aquila, Timothy, Titus, Epaphras, etc.) had covered in eight years, the Roman Empire “from Jerusalem to Illyricum” (Rom.15:18-20, cf. Ac.19:1-10).

How did they do it? What was this simple yet effective mission strategy? Let us see how Jesus trained the disciples to do it, in Luke 10:1-9. He trained them to do “disciple-making” to reach Galileans, and after the resurrection He commissioned them to do the same to all peoples: “make disciples of all nations...” (Mt.28:18-20).

In Luke 10, the “72 others” (not including the original 12) were trained to do pioneering ministry: “where he was about to go” (v.1). They were told that the harvest was plentiful (v.2) or ripe for reaping (Jn.4:35; cf. 2 Cor.6:2), and indeed they returned with joy, “Mission successful” (v.17). They cast out demons even if they were not instructed or trained to do so! And also they were told that it was a perilous mission. They were sent “as lambs among wolves” (v.3)!

Yet they were able to effectively make disciples for Jesus, without having to go back and do follow-up. Even in a cross-cultural situation, Jesus discipled Sychar city in two days without having to go back or leave any disciple to do further follow-up (Jn.4)!

To do effective disciple-making, Jesus gave them only three main instructions: Go simply, go strategically and go servantly!

Go simply. "Do not take a purse or bag or sandals" (v.4a). The disciple-makers needed to just bring their bare necessities without having to bring extra luggage. God can (and often does) use ordinary people to make disciples in ordinary and simple ways. No need to be sophisticated or "high tech" which often complicates one's lifestyle, hereby making one look affluent thus unapproachable. What's required in disciple-making is hi-touch, and often hi-tech diverts time from forming relationships and making friends. Today's tentmakers (cross-cultural disciple makers) just need to bring their Bibles, without having to bring Bible dictionaries and commentaries!

Go strategically. "Do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him... Stay in that house; eating and drinking whatever they give you..." (vv.4b-7).

The disciples were told to focus and not be delayed or diverted from the master plan: just find a "person of peace," and live with him/her and disciple him and through him, his family and friends! Enjoy his hospitality and share your "walk with Jesus" with him/her. In Jewish culture, visiting Jews are hosted by someone whose house has an upper room – for free for the first two days and on the third day, (s)he must help the host in his livelihood – let him who does not work, not eat! For natural entry and support in Jewish and Gentile communities Apostle Paul and his team had a tentmaking micro-business to share Jesus among them. Paul intentionally had a "secular" livelihood, in order to be model "work ethic" to his converts and disciples (2 Th.3:7-10). That's why historically, the best missionaries (including "the father of modern missions," William Carey) were tentmakers!

Go servantly. "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat whatever is set before you. Heal the sick... and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you'" (vv.8-9). They were to serve their host family and the community with the talents and gifts that they had. Today, we can do friendship (or lifestyle or relational) evangelism while doing holistic ministry. Serve the people in their physical needs (esp. healing), psychological needs (esp. counseling), social needs (esp. community organizing) and spiritual needs (through prayer and Bible reflection in small groups).

Again, note that they did not have to bring outside resources which are often used unwisely and often turn the provider into an unwitting patron-dictator and the recipients into perennial dependents (beggars!). Unless done with much care and wisdom/expertise, outsiders and their resources often dis-empower rather than empower! In fact the community (and even rural tribals) have survived and thrived for centuries without outside help! The fact that a community exists show they have local resources to sustain them!

There is almost a 100% guarantee of success because if one can't find a "person of peace" in a specific context, the disciple-maker can just move on to the next one (vv.10-15)! But if one finds a "man of peace" as will happen 95% of the time, following the disciple-making strategy as closely as possible will catalyze a spontaneous expansion of the Kingdom of God—an insider movement facilitated by a local leader to disciple his/her people!

Thus, the outsider just needs to disciple a local "person of peace!" To disciple is to Model, Assist, Watch, and Leave (M.A.W.L.). Disciple-makers just need to model three skills that

should form their disciples' DNA like Jesus did (Mark 3:13-15). (1) Gather a small group (maximum of 12) to share life as fellow members of God's global family. (2) Reflect together prayerfully on what it means to obey Jesus through Bible meditation, thereby teaching one another how to handle God's Word individually, in short, how to have personal devotions to experience God "day and night." And (3) Go to their relatives and/or friends to share Jesus and His powerful presence with them; in short, do friendship evangelism and discipling.

Once the discipler sees that his disciple can facilitate prayerful and practical Bible sharing with fellow believers, meditate regularly on God's Word and obey what (s)he learns and share his/her faith with non-believers, (s)he can leave and go to make disciples in another people/context. (S)He must leave to prove that his/her disciple has truly been empowered (authorized to make their own disciples), as Paul instructed: "And the things you heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim.2:2).

This is quality discipleship, in contrast to the dominant "church growth" strategy that implants "church-goer" DNA in new believers who become "church officers/ministers" at best and nominal "Sunday Christians" at worst. Disciple-making strategy expects each new convert to quickly learn how to self-feed (self-theologize) from God's Word, self-grow with other believers and self-reproduce in nonbelievers. The aim is to produce mature believers whose Christ-like character is to love and serve others (Col.1:28-29, Lk.14:25-33) quickly demonstrated and tested under the guidance of the discipler. Each disciple is expected to multiply like each cell in our body, and like each part of a starfish that can grow into another starfish!

Simple, isn't it? But most of us have to unlearn the "traditions of the elders" of our local church and denomination. Let's just go back to the simple mission strategy of Jesus—to multiply quality Christians effectively by simply multiplying disciple-makers. May each of us become an effective disciple-maker for the rest of our life, till we see all our neighbors worldwide become our brothers and sisters in Christ!

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